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# THE CALL TO PROPHETIC SERVICE

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# THE CALL TO PROPHETIC SERVICE

## FROM ABRAHAM TO PAUL

By

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Foreword by

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# Foreword

By Cleland B. McAfee, Ph.D., D.D., LL.D.

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HUMAN needs are apt to be recurrent, and when a vital need does recur, it is the part of wisdom to examine carefully how it has been supplied in earlier appearances. It is difficult to suppose that there has ever been a time of more definite and conscious need among thoughtful men for an increase of prophetic voices than now. The confusion of the new knowledge without a corresponding enrichment of ethical impulse, the vastly increased wealth of the world without a corresponding increase of altruism for its use, the new proximity of races and national groups without a corresponding unity of spirit and many other complicating elements in social life —make such voices supremely desirable. But similar needs have appeared in the past. The Reformation period called for prophetic utterances and received them. Luther, Calvin, Knox and their fellows came in response to need and spoke as prophets to their time and to succeeding ages. A similar demand came in the earlier Christian days, and Augustine, Anselm, Athanasius and their fellows spoke the needed word. But the clearest instances of such prophetic speech are recorded for us in the Scriptures, covering a variety of occasions, but bringing a similar message.

How were such prophets secured? What appeal

brought them out of seclusion? What message had they to deliver when they did emerge? It is essential for us to know, if we are to face intelligently the need of our own times. Whoever can lead us through this field of investigation does us a needed service.

Professor Schaeffer wisely turns to the Biblical material, both because it is richest and because it is available for all students. His study includes the conditions under which the prophet was called, the method whereby the call was presented to him, his response in its initial stages and also during the progress of his obedience to his heavenly vision, and the fundamental message which he had to deliver. This involves a study of the age in which the work was done, providing parallels at many points to our own age. It is widely and wisely done, as a reading of the book will reveal. It is not necessary to follow the argument in all details in order to accept gladly its fundamental lines.

Two uses occur to me for this fresh study of the prophetic voices of Christian and pre-Christian history. One is for men who know themselves to be in the prophetic service of our own day. Many of them are ministers, many are technically laymen, though their ordination to this service is often as clear as that of any minister. These are men to whom their fellows look to say a word of wisdom for which the world waits. Three possibilities lie before them: they may be dumb, voiceless before the confusion of the age; they may talk inanities, or even utterly erroneous things, failing to catch or to transmit the message they were meant to deliver; or they may stand in their places courageously, sure of their message and unfaltering in their assurance of its value. Let them survey the records of their predecessors in this high office. How did they receive their call? How did they maintain their prophetic assurance? How did they deliver their

message? Surely these are days for such a study in behalf of existing prophets of God.

The other use of this study is for men who are facing the possibility of their call to prophetic service, young men finding their way into their own future. When such a man wants to know how to recognize the divine call and feels that the record of the divine dealing with men will help him, the material for his use is not abundant. Books which can be put into the hands of thoughtful young people who want guidance at this point have not been produced in large numbers. This one is a welcome addition to the small number. It is, probably, the most thorough of them all and most comprehensive in its scope. It may be laid in the hands of young people to help them to learn God's side and their own side of the call to such service as will make them prophets for their own time. Many of them will find in it the ground on which they can rest as they say: "Here am I; send me!" The labour of years has entered into the volume. It is to be hoped that many labourers will find their way into prophetic service by means of it.

# Preface

IN his *Future Leadership of the Church,* Dr. John R. Mott expresses keen surprise at the almost total lack of literature on the call to full-time Christian service. "Is it not strange," he writes, "that there is so little literature defining and presenting the call to the ministry in terms of the present age and opportunity? What other subject of such importance has been so neglected?" No less intense is the disappointment of all serious-minded Christians, who are at all conscious of the alarming shortage of suitable ministerial candidates to man our vacant pulpits.

That there is some connection, in this case, between literature and man-power is shown by a recent investigation of the libraries of a large variety of universities and theological seminaries. A limited number of pamphlets and books have been written along kindred lines. But in none of them has any attempt been made to give us a thoroughgoing discussion of the rich, illuminating material in the Bible bearing on the subject. Books on the Biblical conception of the prophetic call, in its relation to modern needs, are conspicuous by their absence.

The result is that the atmosphere in which the potential preacher moves, is charged with the most nebulous kind of uncertainty as to what really constitutes a call to the ministry. The call comes and it is left unheeded, for the reason that the basic principles of such a call have not been made sufficiently clear.

Various attempts have been made to remedy the situation. We have our college secretaries, student-pastors,

vocational conferences, lifework discussions and Father-and-Son banquets. All these efforts are very excellent as far as they go. But sporadic recruiting campaigns are, at best, only relief measures. We must go to the heart of the problem, if a continuous and more adequate supply of the best young men is to be secured for the great work of the ministry.

For some years the present writer has given himself quite definitely to the work of preaching and talking to young men upon the meaning of the prophetic call to the young man of today. The call-experiences of the principal prophets and preachers of Old and New Testament times are both rich and varied, and full of illustrative themes for the presentation of the claims of the ministry. Believing that the Scriptures are the best guide in such matters, the author of these pages has endeavoured, on the basis of a careful study of the facts, to bring out the Biblical view of the call to ministerial service. Five years of delightful exploring in the depths of Scripture have brought to light a veritable mine of exceedingly valuable information and illuminating thought on a highly important and most interesting subject.

This book is really more than a discussion of the call-experience. It also contains a thorough treatment of the message and mission of the one called and commissioned for a specific task. In every case, the call is a call to service.

H. S.

*Maywood, Illinois.*

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# Introduction

THE material in the following chapters has been gathered, for the most part, from the great storehouse of divine truth. In discussing our topic we have endeavoured to explain the turning-point in the lives of the prophets and apostles from a Biblical or religious rather than a psychological point of view. Psychology has its limitations, especially in the realm of religious experience (compare chapter XIII). We shall never succeed, by purely psychological means, in unravelling the call-experience of a prophet or preacher and in analyzing it without any residue. Such an experience marks a distinct spiritual crisis in the life of the individual, through which he becomes conscious of his call from God and his mission to the people. In describing the event the prophets do not speak of a resolution or purpose, framed by themselves, to devote themselves to their prophetic task. They would not presume to speak for God on their own authority. They have been divinely commissioned to act as His messengers. Gladly would they evade the call, if they only could. But they are under divine compulsion. We are told in so many words that in a moment of spiritual exaltation they had been transported into the divine presence. God was so near and so real to them that they actually had a vision of the Deity. They were absolutely certain that they had met God and that He had spoken to them. A great religious experience is a tremendous responsibility. They could not leave the presence of the Most High without receiving a message from the divine

Sovereign. The man who has seen God must testify for Him. It is aside from the point to argue that this vision of God had no objective reality and that it was a subjective experience. We may be quite sure that to these seers of old the vision had objective reality. To see God —no matter how—is the all-important thing.

There is great variety in the call-experiences of the members of the goodly fellowship of the prophets and apostles. Then, too, considerable difference is to be noted in the thought-content of their messages. But this is as it should be.

Most of the prophets appear on the scene of history with startling suddenness and, seemingly, without proper introduction. We feel sometimes that we should like to know more about their early history. But in the written pages of the prophets all such biographical material is reduced to a minimum. We might almost say that it is conspicuous by its absence. It must be borne in mind that we are dealing with religious history. Unlike the modern historian, the prophet does not speak of "men who have made history." According to the latter, God alone makes history. Man, to be sure, has a part in the process, but he is only a means to an end. Without God he can do nothing. The Creator, not the creature, is to be exalted and magnified. Human biography, therefore, is no immediate concern of prophetic literature. What there is of it is merely incidental to the narrative. The religious interpretation predominates. As interpreters of religion, the prophets have to do with the facts of religious experience. They are interested, not so much in the history of the individual, as in the relation which he sustains to God and his fellowmen. Anything that has a bearing on that relation is of sufficient importance to receive some attention at least. The call-experience is a case in point. As a rule some reference is made to it. The prophet regards it as

the decisive moment in his life, which started him on his career as a "speaker for God." He alludes to the event not for its own sake. As a fact of religious experience it has a religious meaning, and as such it deserves a place in the sacred record. Where the call is not expressly mentioned, the writer presupposes it.

The facts of the call-experience furnish instructive examples of the variety of the calls in Scripture. They are far from uniform or stereotype, as is to be expected under the circumstances. How Abraham was called we do not know. In Genesis 15:1 we read, "The word of Jehovah came unto Abram in a vision." While the reference here is to a subsequent event in the life of the patriarch, it is nevertheless interesting to note that the call may have come to him in the form of a vision. The vision, just alluded to, was probably a night vision, to judge from the starry heavens, mentioned in Genesis 15:5. According to chapter 46 verse 2, God spoke to Jacob in "the visions of the night." Did God speak to Abram, while he was yet in Babylonia, in a "vision of the night," or in the form of a theophany by day? Our question must remain unanswered for lack of further evidence. One thing, however, cannot be doubted and that is the fact of the call-experience itself. His preparatory experiences are involved in obscurity. All that we have is a brief reference to his Babylonian antecedents. In the midst of his idolatrous surroundings he is suddenly confronted by Jehovah, who commands him to leave Babylonia for religious reasons. He is convinced that God is speaking to him and he obeys. In the ensuing pilgrimage the migrating patriarch never loses the sweet consciousness of God's abiding presence. It is a remarkable demonstration of faith. Abraham is not the natural fruitage of the nature-worship of Mesopotamia. The facts are against such an assumption. Somehow he had met the living God and

heard His voice. The experience was the starting-point of a remarkable career. Faith is a glorious adventure!

The Egyptian background in the life of Moses does not explain his prophetic career. Nor did he import his God from the land of Midian. Jehovah is not a local Kenite deity who was raised to the dignity of the God of Israel. It is the God of the fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, who appears to Moses in the burning bush. The flaming bush becomes a sanctuary. When God saw that the reverent investigator turned aside to observe the remarkable phenomenon, "He called him." The call to service is more than mere accident or caprice. Essential to a call, in this case, is the element of reverence and sincerity, a receptive mind and heart, and a willingness to listen and to hear what God has to say. The message comes, when Moses "turns aside to see." Standing in the sanctuary of God's presence, he receives a call to courageous service. God speaks to him, and he speaks to the people. The shepherd of Midian is sent to the sheepfolds of Goshen with authority to speak and to act for the Shepherd of Israel.

When God calls He begins early. Samuel had a pious mother who dedicated her firstborn to God's service even before he was born. The young acolyte received part of his training in the temple at Shiloh under the tutorship of Eli. The call of God came with repeated emphasis along the path of present duty. He hears a voice calling him to prophetic service. His response is, "Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth." He was a great prophet. But his greatness is not the result of his preparatory training in the temple, neither is he the product of the age in which he lived. Modern historians affirm that great men are the product of great times. This is not true in the realm of spiritual things. The prophet Samuel was not a child of his time. He was called when the word of God was

scarce in the land. It was a time of spiritual declension and of moral decay. An age like this cannot give birth to such a prophet, apart from divine intervention. God Himself raised up Samuel in response to his mother's prayers and called him, in the hushed silence of the night, "ere the lamp of God went out in the temple."

Amos tells us that he was taken "from behind the flock," as Elisha was taken from behind the ploughteam. The shepherd-prophet from the Tekoan hills, like the disciples of Jesus, left all to obey the call he had received. How he obtained his call is not certain. Some believe that he had a vision; others, that he had heard the voice of God through the momentous events then transpiring on the political horizon. He is convinced that the Assyrians will soon come from the north and punish Israel for its sins. This conviction, it is said, gave rise to the threatening tone of his prophecies. We are not saying that Amos was unable to detect the signs of the times. But there is more to be said about his call-experience. He had a profound religious experience. That day he felt as if God had actually taken hold of him while he was engaged in his ordinary pursuit. "And Jehovah said, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel." What was there for him to do? "The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" He preaches because he must, and not because the new vocation is more profitable than the occupation of a shepherd and fig-cultivator. The consciousness of his having received a divine call is real and vivid. He is no professional prophet, like the members of the prophetic guilds, whose delirious utterances are paid for in cold cash and who prophesy smooth things. He will proclaim to the self-complacent calf-worshippers at Bethel the much-needed message of social justice as an integral part of religion. This may neither be popular nor profitable. It may even be dangerous. But what of it? He will

preach his message in the face of all the weak-kneed, time-serving Amaziahs in the land! A righteous, moral Deity demands it! He is under divine orders. He has seen (compare 1:1; 7:1, 4, 7, 8; 8:1, 2; 9:1) some aspect of the divine. Since then divine necessity is laid upon him.

Hosea, his companion prophet of the north, puts the emphasis not so much upon the logical necessity of righteousness as upon the seat of action or the inner motive. Amos was shocked to find that the people of his day were trying to make up for their bad morals by offering bribes to the Deity. Sacrifices abounded in the worship of the ritualists at Bethel and elsewhere. This bribe-idea in religion was a noticeable feature of the idolatrous worship among Israel's neighbors. Amos appears on the scene and says that God is not to be bribed by sacrificial offerings, like the idols of their heathen neighbors. Jehovah is a righteous God who demands social righteousness as a part of religion. True, says Hosea, but how are the people, with their low ethical ideas, ever to do what is right and just toward God and their fellowmen? This cold bargaining spirit savours too much of a coldly calculating commercialism. There is no love in their religion. What they need is a sufficient motive or driving dynamic from within. And this he finds in love—a holy love. He is the prophet of love, who could illustrate his message from what had happened to him in his own home. Early in his life he fell in love with an attractive girl by the name of Gomer, whom he married. After a time the young woman proved unfaithful. Gomer and another man eloped, leaving the prophet with a torn and bleeding heart. It was a terrible shock to him, but somehow he could not forget the wife of his youth. Loving her still, he sought her everywhere. Meanwhile the paramour had sold her into slavery. The wronged husband redeems her, takes her

back and pleads with her, reminding her of the covenant which they had made together.

What a striking text from which to preach the love of God for a wayward people! Jehovah is the wronged husband; Israel, the erring bride. Out of his grief for Gomer there comes to him a vision of the loving heart of God grieving over His erring children. The spiritual outcome of the domestic experience was that "God is Love." It was more than a natural psychological process. A wronged husband does not necessarily become a prophet. More is needed than a domestic trial before a man can proclaim a deep religious truth. The tragic experience of a ruined home may colour the prophet's message, but it does not explain the spiritual truth which he teaches. What Hosea taught, he had learned in the school of God. Being a man of religious sensibilities, he could, with God's help, draw a deep religious lesson from the experiences of his wedded life.

Probably the most important Old Testament contribution to religion came from the prophet of faith. Amos had taught the necessity of putting religion into practice seven days a week. This was of tremendous importance to an age which had divorced religion from life. Religion has its man-to-man relation. No man can serve God in His sanctuary, whether at Bethel or Gilgal, and then forget to serve Him in his own home, in the world of business and in his daily contacts with men. That this might be accomplished Hosea said that a man must have the love of God in his heart. The mainsprings of action must be touched and set in motion. Love—divine love—will do it. But how is this love to be brought to bear upon the hearts and lives of men? Isaiah replies, By faith in the covenant-keeping God of Israel. The prophet had grown up in an age of material prosperity, characterized by materialism in religion. The long and brilliant reign of Uz-

ziah had made men irreligious, materialistic and proud of what they had accomplished by their own wisdom and strength. They trusted in their earthly possessions, in military resources and in the arm of flesh rather than in the sovereign power of the Holy One of Israel. God was no longer a power in their lives. They believed, as we have said, in the power of material wealth, in gold and silver shekels, in military alliances, and in the purchased protection of earthly potentates. The sin of the age was pride and unbelief. Pride is the opposite of faith. Without humility there can be no faith. Self-sufficiency, pride and arrogance offer no congenial soil for faith. The latter requires for its growth and further development a lowly and receptive heart.

But where were such hearts to be found in the days of Uzziah, whose pride was more or less typical of the spirit of the age? In his palmy days, men looked up to him as their ideal of what a man should be. Time was, when the youthful Isaiah was numbered among these hero-worshippers. But Uzziah was smitten with leprosy and he died and was buried in a leper's tomb. With a sad and heavy heart Isaiah went up to the temple to pray. His earthly hero gone, his heavenly Hero now appears on the horizon of his life. He sees in a vision of the enthroned Lord, the sovereign Ruler of the universe, the King of kings, surrounded by a host of heavenly attendants, with veiled faces, evermore singing their antiphonal hymn of praise in honour of a thrice holy God. That Isaiah on this occasion saw God with the inner eye, or that the vision was a subjective experience transpiring in the inner consciousness is hardly an established fact. We are not so sure that it was an ecstatic vision, brought about by a vivid imagination on the part of a man who had been stirred to the point of ecstasy by the singing of the Levitical choirs on Mount Zion. Doubtless the service was im-

pressive and the singing uplifting. But Isaiah's temple experience was certainly more than the æsthetic response to what he saw and heard. What we can say about it is that the subjective and the objective, the natural and the supernatural, met and Isaiah had the vision which he describes in chapter 6. In explaining the vision we must not forget that the prophet, at any rate, regarded it as objectively real. It is so real in fact that he exclaims, "Woe is me, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts!" He is painfully aware of the contrast between God's holiness and his own uncleanness. But he is absolved and responds to the call of service. His call marks the beginning of a great prophetic career. He gathers up in his own person the faith of Abraham, the leadership of Moses, the boldness of Amos and the spirituality of Jeremiah.

In describing his call, Jeremiah does not say, "Jehovah appeared unto me," or "Jehovah took me," but "The word of Jehovah came unto me saying, I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations." He was predestined to prophetic service before he was born. This act of consecration, according to the prophet, did not proceed from a pious mother, but from Jehovah Himself. God not only keeps step, so to speak, with the onward march of historical events. He makes His plans long in advance; indeed, He selects and appoints His spokesmen from eternity itself. But the mere thought of predestination does not prevent Jeremiah from doubting his ability to serve in such a capacity. He is too young and inexperienced. The function of one who speaks for God is that he be able to speak. He has never had occasion to speak on such tremendous issues. "Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth." He actually feels the touch of the divine hand upon his lips. God Himself

ordains him. There is no reference to a winged seraph who acts as an intermediary. God Himself draws near and takes complete charge of the ordination service. The transcendent God of Isaiah has become the immanent God, who enters into intimate relations with the individual soul.

This nearness of God and the assurance of His continued help left no room for further doubt in the young man's mind as to what response he ought to make to the divine announcement. Still trembling with emotion, he accepts the responsibility. The call is too real to be ignored. It is just as real as the reality of the divine presence. A man cannot have such an experience without being pressed into service. Just what that experience was is difficult to explain. Jeremiah simply relates what he heard and felt during the momentous encounter. No mention is made of an external appearance of the Deity, neither does the narrator allude to a vision. Some writers explain the call as an inner experience. It is claimed that Jeremiah's prophetic activity is a reaction against the cruel reign of Manasseh. But if that is true why did it require a half-century of persecution and insult before the members of the Jewish church could find a prophetic spokesman? The statement is made that no one dared to protest for fear of dying a martyr's death. But since when is a real prophet afraid to deliver God's message to kings and potentates?

In this connection we naturally think of Moses and Pharaoh, of Samuel and Saul, of Nathan and David, of Elijah and Ahab, of Amos and Jeroboam II, of Isaiah and Ahaz, of John the Baptist and Herod Antipas, of Jesus and His enemies, of Paul and Nero. Why should a prophet belie his name when a persecutor sits upon the throne? The genuine prophet is a courageous man. Had Jeremiah lived in the time of Manasseh he would have

shown the same prophetic courage that he manifested later. It was no easier to be a prophet from the year 626 B. C. onward than it was several decades before. Equally untenable is the assumption that Jeremiah began to prophesy out of a sense of duty to the people whom he loved. The catastrophic events of the near future would find them unprepared and he must speak to their hearts and prepare their minds for the things that were to come. But a sympathetic disposition alone will never prompt a man to become a prophet. He must have the prophetic gift. This gift is conferred through the enabling power of the call to service. Jeremiah was convinced that he had such a call. The call may have assumed the form of a prophetic vision. That he does not explicitly mention it, does not prove the contrary, especially when both Isaiah and Ezekiel had such inaugural visions.

The call-experience of Ezekiel is described with great detail in the first three chapters of his book. The prophet of the exile gives an elaborate description of the vision which came to him in Babylonia in the year 593 B. C. A divine chariot, drawn by cherubim, approaches from the north with whirlwind velocity. It is a throne-wagon. The enthroned divine Sovereign has "the appearance of a man." Falling upon his face in the august presence of the Almighty, he hears a voice saying unto him, "Son of man, stand upon thy feet and I will speak unto thee," for "I will send thee to the children of Israel and thou shalt speak My words unto them." God Himself inspires the messenger who is to speak with divine authority. This is made plain to him by the symbolical eating of an inscribed roll which had been handed to him for that purpose. Having thus assimilated its contents, he could say in a very real sense, "Thus saith the Lord." The message must become a part of the prophet's personality before he can speak for God. A superficial acquaintance with the

Word is not enough, least of all under the trying experiences of exilic existence. The youthful prophet is keenly aware of this, but is prevailed upon to undertake his difficult mission. Now that the Hebrew nation has been practically destroyed, he is to gather the scattered exiles and minister to their spiritual needs. He is to be a pastor with a message for the individual. True to his mission, he sounds the individual note in religion.

Concerning the call of Jonah we read, "The word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city and cry out against it." How the call came is not explained. All that may be gathered from the above text is that he heard the voice of Jehovah commissioning him to go to Nineveh. The voice which the prophet hears is commonly taken to mean the inner voice. But there is reason to suppose that the voice was accompanied by a vision of some kind, as in the case of Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Jonah, in any event, derives the voice from God who spoke to him. The voice was so real and so insistent that the unwilling missionary fled "from the presence of the Lord."

The same prophetic formula, so frequently met with in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as well as in the Minor Prophets, occurs in only one place in the New Testament. Luke 3:2 reads, "The word of God came unto John in the wilderness." John the Baptist is the connecting link between the Old Testament and the New. Aaronic descent, Samuel-like consecration and a pious home are among the early influences which touched and shaped the young prophet-life. The desert-loving prophet has much in common with Elijah. The fearless preacher speaks with prophetic authority, proclaiming "the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins," as a preparation for the Messianic age. He had a prophetic call. How he obtained it we are not told. A desert background would naturally

lend itself to meditation and reflection. But did the prophetic call of the Baptist originate in a contemplative mind given to spiritual meditation? He refers to himself as a "voice." Is this the voice that speaks to a man from within? Was it the result of an intuitive process? Is it the inner call that the above writer has in mind when he says, "The word of God came unto John in the wilderness?"

While it is tempting to assume this, we cannot help calling attention to the call-experiences of Amos, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In the case of Amos and Ezekiel the vision plays an important part. "The word of God came to Jeremiah" possibly in the form of prophetic vision. The vision as an element in the call-experience of John the Baptist is not to be overlooked. He, too, it appears, is a prophetic seer, who sees the Spirit descending like a dove upon the Nazarene. Prior to this "I knew Him not, but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is He that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1:33-34). He "saw and bare record." The inference that the call-experience of John the Baptist assumed the form of a prophetic vision, accompanied by a voice, commissioning him to preach, is almost irresistible. Like the prophetic seers of more ancient times, he had a vision and heard a voice speaking to him. To him it was the voice of God. "The word of God had come to him," and he repeated to the people the substance of what he had heard. God had spoken to him, and the time had now come for him to begin his prophetic activity.

As in the case of Jeremiah, the call of Jesus is referred back to eternity. Historically, however, the call of Jesus to Messianic service coincides with His baptism. This is

preceded by thirty years of quiet preparation in the home, the shop and the synagogue. The prophetic summons to the water baptism of John signalizes the beginning of Christ's public ministry. By it He was officially called and anointed for His work by the measureless gift of the Holy Spirit, which also included the gift of miraculous power. The baptism of John, in this case, is not a rite of purification from sin, but rather an act of self-consecration on the part of Israel's Messiah. By a voice made audible to His consciousness the sinless Jesus is designated as the Messiah of prophetic promise. Already the cross casts its shadow over the baptismal waters. The momentous scene is succeeded by a period of retirement in the wilderness of Judah. In the ensuing struggle with temptation, the culminating point is reached in the preparation of Jesus for His Messianic career. Jesus goes forth from the mighty struggle victorious, ready to undertake His God-given task. He accepts His mission with a heart full of compassion and the tenderest love for those whom He came to save. The call of Jesus, then, is the Shepherd's loving response to human need. Self-sacrificing love is the only adequate motive for Christian service. Special attention is called in this connection to pages 346 ff., and to the sermon on stewardship (pp. 357 ff.).

To provide for present and future needs, Jesus, in the early part of His ministry, selects and calls twelve young men "that they might be with Him" constantly and learn of Him. This constant association with the great Teacher and Preacher is to be their training school for apostolic service. If the disciples are to proclaim the glad tidings of the Messianic age, they must sit at the Master's feet, catch the inspiration of His wonderful personality, hear His dynamic words, witness His mighty deeds and ultimately rise to the height of a victorious faith in the Son of God. Thus equipped, they are sent out on their first

missionary journey to the people of their native province. Ripening harvest fields in other areas call for additional helpers. The preaching tour in Galilee is succeeded by the mission of the Seventy, whom Christ had selected from an ever-widening circle of devoted followers. It was a very successful home mission effort. Gradually the field expands beyond the borders of Palestine, and other workers are added to the missionary forces of the apostolic age. Among these is the greatest missionary of all ages—Saul of Tarsus.

Paul, the foreign missionary, was born in the Jewish colony of a Greek-speaking metropolitan city in the Roman province of Cilicia. His father was a Pharisee of the tribe of Benjamin, enjoying the rights of Roman citizenship. Young Saul inherited the same privilege. Of far greater importance for his subsequent development was the moulding influence of a Pharisaic home, where piety was hereditary. As a matter of political necessity he learned to respect the name of Cæsar. But to a tribal descendant of Benjamin, King Saul was the greater hero. He may respect Cæsar, but to him the idea of burning incense to the local image of the emperor is repulsive in the extreme. Deep down in his heart the son of the Pharisee clings to Jehovah, the God of Israel, who is also the God of all the earth. The growing lad receives part of his education in the local synagogue, learns a trade, enters the rabbinical college in Jerusalem, sits at the feet of the foremost rabbi of the age and eventually takes the lead in the persecution of the infant Church.

But the zealous persecutor is suddenly converted on the road to Damascus. According to Acts, he sees a supernatural light above the brightness of the noon-day sun, hears a heavenly voice, engages in a conversation of some length with the risen Christ and receives a brief outline of the work he is to do. The appearance was not visionary,

but actual. The light which he saw was the reflection of Christ's heavenly glory, revealing to the persecutor the Shepherd of the persecuted flock. He never doubted for a moment that he had seen Jesus with his bodily eyes and heard His commissioning voice. Of this he is absolutely sure. He takes particular pains at Cæsarea to make clear to his audience that he had witnessed an external appearance of the glorified Son of God. But, says the psychologist, Paul's language must be taken in a figurative sense. In Galatians 1:16, for instance, he speaks almost like a modern psychologist, of a revelation of the Son of God "in me." The revelation of Christ to Paul, it is argued, was not external but internal; not objective in the philosophic sense but subjective. This explanation would be quite acceptable were it not for two passages in First Corinthians, not to speak of the threefold account in Acts, where Paul emphasizes the external aspect of his apostolic call and commission. Putting all these passages together, we conclude that the Damascus experience was both external and internal. It was not a natural psychological process, as some would infer from the "goads," mentioned in Acts 26:14. Saul was not gradually coming nearer to Christianity before he was converted. His sudden conversion and call to apostolic service was not the natural outcome of an intellectual and moral fermentation, which had been agitating his soul for some time.

According to the explicit testimony of Paul himself, the mighty change was not wrought out in the laboratory of Saul's own thoughts or amid the compunctions of conscience. From a mental and moral point of view his condition before conversion was not favourable to a vision of Jesus. Physical factors had nothing to do with the vision, nor did it originate in the physiological constitution of the man. He was not converted by the ordinary operation of spiritual laws within the realm of human

personality. The conversion and call of the apostle cannot be confined to the natural sphere of every-day life. It is a sudden transformation, an unheralded event, a unique experience. A gradual psychological process is ruled out by the evidence that we have. Paul's physical, mental, moral and spiritual equipment does not explain the miraculous event. The Damascus experience was more than a spiritual revelation of Christ to the soul, accompanied by favourable conditions from without. Paul saw Christ from without as well as from within and heard an audible voice, commissioning him to preach the faith which he had sought to destroy. As a fact of religious experience it is unique. In the annals of conversion there is nothing like it. While the spiritual crises of the most Paul-like men in history may be studied with much profit, the ever-memorable scene on the Damascus road stands quite alone in a class by itself.

Reference has been made to the variety of the calls in Scripture. No less varied are the responses to the call of service. Truly sublime is the faith of Abraham. The aged patriarch obeys the voice of God, not knowing exactly whither he went. Samuel replies, "Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth." It is not for the servant to procrastinate when the Master speaks. Amos does not seem to have resisted his call for a moment; he left the flock to follow what to him was an irresistible call. With a lion-like courage, the fearless shepherd leaps into the arena of Israelitish life, singing his doom-song in the presence of a scoffing, threatening aristocracy. The natural ardour of Isaiah is quickened into an eager response by the consciousness that his sins had been forgiven. The prophet of faith is not driven to his prophetic task; he volunteers for service in response to a call expressed in the most general terms. In the fulness of time "the word of God came to John in the wilderness." The herald runs

in advance of the royal chariot; a voice is heard with no uncertain sound, announcing that the King is near. There is no tarrying at such a time; the fleet-footed messenger must be on his way. John the Baptist appears at the fords of Jordan with the suddenness of an Elijah come to life again. He is a man of great spiritual power who is resolved to drive men into the penitential floods of repentance. In his eyes there is neither king nor commoner, neither priest nor layman; all are sinners in need of the cleansing waters. The rugged preacher has a keen sense of duty. The word of the Lord has come to him to preach repentance and the herald must deliver his message. When the King calls the herald forgets all about self. He does not express a contrary wish, hoping that the King may yet modify His orders to suit the convenience of the runner. A word of command is sufficient to send him on his errand.

That is the picture we get of the forerunner of our Lord. And how regal, how divine, is the self-dedication of Jesus to sacrificial service! The Messiah-test in the wilderness is a necessary prelude for the commencement of His Messianic activity. How eagerly the Galilæan fishermen responded to the call, "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men!" And Peter and Andrew "straightway left their nets and followed Him." A similar invitation is just as speedily accepted by James and John, the sons of Zebedee. "And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him." To Levi-Matthew, a tax-gatherer, He says, "Follow Me; and he left all, rose up, and followed Him." When a man leaves a profitable business to engage in a religious enterprise something must be said for the compelling power of the call of Christ. It is by virtue of that power than men are prevailed upon to join the ranks of His immediate followers. The work grows to alarming proportions—alarming,

at least, to the zealous defenders of the old faith. Among these is a former student of the celebrated Gamaliel. Saul of Tarsus is headed for Damascus, is seized by an irresistible power and humbly asks, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" He instantly obeys the call to apostolic service, casting in his lot with a small, despised sect at the risk of his life. Why resist? The risen, glorified, all-powerful Christ had spoken and Saul must adjust himself, without delay, to the new situation.

However, temperamentally and otherwise, men are so constituted as to react, with a considerable degree of variety, to the call of service. Temperamentally one man may be active; another, passive. The one will be quicker to respond to the call than the other. And yet both may be equally vigorous in carrying out their mission, once they have accepted the responsibility of definite and aggressive service. Moses, for example, shrinks from the immediate assumption of a great prophetic task. The adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter has lost his fiery temper amid the mellowing scenes of pastoral life, far removed from the outcries of his enslaved brethren. He is no longer the proud and daring prince of the royal household. He says, "Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" And the answer comes, "Surely I will be with thee." But the diffident man replies, "They will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, Jehovah hath not appeared unto thee." The ability to work signs and wonders is conferred upon him. Still he hesitates. To his mind lack of eloquence is a disqualification for service. "O my Lord," he says, "I am not a man of words, neither heretofore nor since Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant, but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue." And God replies, "Who hath made man's mouth? Have not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth

and teach thee what thou shalt say." But he begs to be excused, suggesting at the same time that another spokesman ought to be selected for the task. "And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Moses and He said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. He shall be thy spokesman unto the people."

Having carried his objections almost to the point of rebellion, Moses, humbly bowing to the sovereign will of God, now undertakes his epoch-making mission. Similar reluctance is met with in the case of Jeremiah. The word of God comes to him with all the force of a personal call, and the inexperienced youth naturally shrinks back for a moment, forgetting that manhood's responsibilities have arrived. "Ah, Lord God," he says, "I know not how to speak; I am too young." He is endowed with a message and being assured of the sustaining power of the divine presence, he goes forth to his ministry with the word of God upon his lips and the Lord by his side. God's will must be done. His word of command was like a burning fire in his heart. "I tried to withstand it, but could not. Thou didst beguile me, O Jehovah, and beguiled I let myself be; Thou wast stronger than I and hast prevailed." He accepts his mission under protest. He had tried hard not to heed the call, but it was of no use. His divine Antagonist was too powerful for him. The struggle is too unequal. He will bow to the inevitable. God's constraining hand had been laid upon him and the protesting prophet yields. Ezekiel, too, describes how the strong hand of God had forced him into the prophetic office (2:9; 3:14, 22). He is overwhelmed with the seriousness of the call which he had received, but he acknowledges the sovereign sway of the Almighty by serving Him.

Jonah has no such compelling sense of the divine sovereignty. He evades the call by headlong flight. "The word

of Jehovah came unto Jonah," and he fled. There is no argument, no debate. He offers no excuse, expresses no doubt; he simply rises up and goes his own way. A miracle is needed to break his stubborn will. Even then he responds most unwillingly. His sense of stewardship is very limited. He finally goes to Nineveh, not to preach repentance or to bless, but to make a cold, oral announcement of impending doom, and then sit down in a nice shady spot to see the end of the wicked city. The theoretical acknowledgment of God's universal sovereignty is one thing; the possession of a missionary dynamic, quite another. All such "intellectuals" must sit down under a juniper-tree and learn the lesson which God taught Jonah. Or, better still, let all such sit at the feet of the first great Missionary —Jesus Christ—and the missionary impulse will not be lacking. Then the call to consecrated service will not go forth unheard. Many will be found, who will respond to it, some with much trepidation of heart and secret misgivings, others with the ready obedience of a dynamic, moving faith in the Son of God. Under normal conditions, a deep experience of religion spells service to humanity, both to the man of action as well as to the passive and deliberating disciple. A great experience is a trumpet-call to active service.

# I

## THE CALL OF ABRAHAM

### Genesis 12: 1-5

IN our discussion of the call to prophetic service, we naturally begin with the call of Abraham. His early history is associated with Ur of the Chaldees along the banks of the Euphrates in southern Babylonia and with Harran in northern Mesopotamia. These two cities were prominent centres of moon-worship. Trade relations with these centres of population would tend to spread the worship of the moon-god Sin, who is simply one of many gods.

Abraham did not get his religion from the moon-worshippers of Babylonia, nor did the followers of Anu, Bel, Ea, Marduk, Shamash, Ishtar and a host of lesser deities have any contribution to make to his conception of God. The religion of the patriarch is really a protest against idolatry. There is not a single trace in Genesis 12-25 of a visible representation of Jehovah. As in the time of Abraham, so later in the decalogue, idolatry was definitely excluded from the Hebrew religion. Image-worship is not elevating but degrading. In the case of the one true God, it would only drag Him down to the low level of the Babylonian gods who fill their distorted bodies with strong drink and goodly quantities of the choicest food. This excessive eating and drinking probably reflects the gluttonous habits of the upper stratum of Babylonian society. Morally these gods do not differ very much from their worshippers. The goddess Ishtar, we

are told, had many paramours. What a low estimate of deity! The God of Abraham, on the other hand, is a spiritual and moral Being. He is not like an oriental judge who can be bribed with a gift. He moves in the realm of the spiritually uplifting and not on the low plane of the physical or of earthly desires.

The call of Abraham is an epoch-making event in the history of religion. It may not be customary to speak of him as a prophet, and yet the fact is not to be overlooked that he, too, is reckoned among the prophets. In Genesis 20:7, Abraham is actually called a prophet who intercedes for a Canaanite by the name of Abimelech. And you will remember how his prayers of intercession in behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah almost saved the cities of the plain from impending disaster. Although not a prophet or a preacher in the technical sense, Abraham, as a recipient of divine revelation, is nevertheless a prophet. Through him the blessings of true religion are to be mediated to the world. This is true prophecy. There is nothing like it in the religion of Babylonia. Soothsaying and magical incantation formulas are not prophecy. Babylonia cannot boast of a single prophet.

The first prophet of Old Testament religion was not the product of his environment. In the idolatrous homeland of the patriarch there was an atmosphere of excessive religiousness, of ceremonial forms and sacrificial rites, coupled not infrequently, in the name of religion, with scenes of the wildest debauchery and the most debasing kind of prostitution. This religiousness in the worship of the principle of natural fertility, so common in all nature-religions, tended to a multiplicity of gods and goddesses; every little locality almost had its own god or goddess with its own sacred rites. In addition to these gods of fertility, having their supposed habitat in some town, village or hamlet, there were the stellar deities, such as the sun,

moon and the stars, each presiding over some aspect of human life. There were gods many and cults many.

A careful study of Babylonian literature shows that, while there are many commendable features connected with the religion of the Tigris-Euphrates valley, it is absolutely certain that neither Abraham nor his descendants could have established the religion of the only true God in such an atmosphere. The patriarch was surrounded by idolatrous influences. His immediate ancestors, including Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor, are said to have "worshipped other gods" (Josh. 24:2). Laban, the son of Nahor (Gen. 29:5) was an idolater. In Genesis 31:30 he accuses Jacob of having "stolen my gods." Not knowing that "Rachel had stolen them," Jacob said to his father-in-law, "With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live" (Gen. 31:32). To steal a man's gods was a serious matter. Laban was much disturbed over the loss of his beloved idols or house-gods. But his attachment to them was no greater than that of his daughter who could not make up her mind to leave home without the teraphim. It is only too obvious that as a representative of the true God, Jacob at this time still had considerable missionary work to do among the members of his own household before he could become a blessing to the nations of the earth. The best thing that Jacob and his family can do from a religious point of view is to leave Babylonia for the land of promise. The necessity of such a separation was even more imperative in the time of Abraham. Consequently there came to the latter, we know not how exactly, the call of God to detach himself from his idolatrous surroundings and to go into a land which the Lord would show him. "And Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation,

and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing: in thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:1, 2, 3 b).

Think of the sacrifices Abraham is called upon to make. He is asked to leave his country, his kindred, and his father's house and to go forth into an unknown land. Most certainly this is no small demand to make of a man, especially in patriarchal times, when the security of a man and his family depended, in case of attack from without, upon the protection of the kindred tribe to which such a family belonged. And besides, if Canaan was to be the destination of the patriarch, what was to be gained from a material standpoint by the abandonment of the Tigris-Euphrates valley with its superior civilization, and with its network of irrigating canals and rivulets which carried fertility to the whole landscape? If Palestine was a land of brooks and fertile valleys, it also had, particularly in what later became the land of Judah, its inhospitable mountain regions, offering but a sparse vegetation for the household and flocks of the migrating patriarch. But what is material gain to a man who has heard the voice of the Almighty calling him to a service which even angels cannot perform? To him, the maintenance of the worship of the true God, endangered so greatly by the nature-worship of Mesopotamia, was the supreme consideration. It was the triumph of the spiritual over the material; the acknowledgment that in God there is something far greater than can be found in nature, for the One who has spoken to him is nature's God.

Others may worship the constellations and bow down to stocks and stones, if they like; others may be attracted by the material splendours of Babylonia's superior civilization, but as for him and his house, they shall serve the living God! All things else are of secondary concern. Once assured that God is calling him, Abraham responds

without wavering. Forthwith he severs, as commanded, all ties of country, of kindred, and of home. To leave one's native land at the age of seventy-five, must have been no small trial to Abraham. At his age, the love of adventure is no longer an incentive to such an undertaking. But, like the heroic missionary of apostolic and modern times, he is not disobedient to the voice, summoning him to sever the ties of all past associations, including the ties of kindred and the scenes of his childhood. He made the sacrifice demanded of him because he loved God better than his native soil and his own kinsmen. His heroic example reminds one of the missionary pioneers of the last century, some of whom went to the foreign field at an advanced age in response to the Macedonian call. Men of faith always respond to the call of duty. Why tarry in idol-ridden Babylonia or in comfort-seeking America when the command is to go forward and occupy the land of promise?

Abraham's obedience to the command of God was an act of heroic faith. Obedience under such conditions argues more than average faith. It marks Abraham as the hero of faith. It is a demonstration of his unflinching faith in the Almighty. The divine command was really a challenge to his faith in Jehovah. He met the challenge then, as later at Moriah (Gen. 22), with that unwavering obedience which is so characteristic of this hero of faith. To him faith without its natural fruit—obedience—was unthinkable. It was his confidence in the character of God, in His providence and loving care, in His integrity, power and wisdom that led him to leave country, home and kindred and to set out on a long and perilous journey, not knowing whither he went. He took God at His word and accepted His promises at their full face value. Why speak of sacrifices in the face of such glorious promises! The promises which are attached to the divine command

in the passage under consideration far outnumber the sacrifices which the patriarch is called upon to make. In the first verse of the twelfth chapter of Genesis he is commanded to leave the land of his birth and early associations for the purpose of settling in a land which is to furnish the historical background of the divine plan of salvation. Verses two and three contain the promises of a numerous posterity and of a great salvation for all mankind. Abraham and his descendants are to be greatly blessed of God in order that they may be the means of blessing others: all nations are included in God's covenant of grace. And verse four speaks of the patriarch's willing submission to God's command. Failure to comply with this command would have rendered the promise of no effect. The land where God's promises were to be fulfilled was hundreds of miles distant from the place of his birth. To avail himself of the promise he must first of all seek the land of promise. Some people's faith delights in laying hold of God's promises but falls short in ready obedience to God's precepts or commands. Not so with the father of the faithful. In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews we read, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive as an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (verses 8-10).

At some time in our lives a similar call comes to each one of us. Whether the voice of God, which summoned Abraham, assumed an audible form or came to him through an awakened conscience, in either case, the patriarch recognized it as divine. No less divine is the gospel-call, whether conveyed to men in a permanent written

form or as the spoken word of God's servant. The uniform call of Christ to all His followers is, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. And every one that forsaketh houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

How easily the divine call, although heard by Abraham, might have been lost, as in the case of so many young men of today, through indecision and moral cowardice. Not long ago a brilliant high school graduate of prepossessing appearance expressed his regrets that his mother would not consent to his leaving home and attending college for the purpose of preparing himself for the study of theology. His mother's attitude is the result of an instinctive desire to keep the young man under the parental roof as long as possible. What a pity that feminine timidity and a lack of self-surrender and courageous faith in the sustaining power of grace, should deprive "the land of promise" of another prophet! There is every indication that the youth in question had heard the call of his Lord, summoning him to the work of the ministry. And yet, for the present at least, the call remains unanswered. This is by no means an isolated case. Only about fifty per cent. of the ministerial candidates in a certain church college, for instance, have the consent of both parents. Strange to say, many of these young men have the consent of their fathers, but not of their mothers, to study for the ministry. Some of the students in one of the theological seminaries have experienced a similar antagonism, mothers in some instances antagonizing for years the lofty idealism of their sons. Such mothers fail to realize that natural affection, in such a case, must give way to One, who said, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37). Hence-

forth let all parents learn to further, and not to hinder, their children in the work of ministering unto others, ever mindful of the right of the Lord and Giver of life to summon us to sever the most sacred of natural ties, to forsake friends and companions, and to go apart with God in preparation for the work of the ministry.

There is no substitute for obedience to the will of God. This lesson was brought home to King Saul in the familiar words, "Obedience is better than sacrifice." The obedience of a self-surrendering faith is better than burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings. Temporal gifts may have their value in religion. But they cannot be compared with the offering of one's entire personality on the altar of loving service. Gifts are no substitute for personal service. Blessed is the man who, like Abraham of old, obeys God's voice calling him, whether by precept or promise, into His service, for that alone is true and saving faith. The work begun by Abraham must be continued by his descendants. Israel's election is for world-service of the highest type. The same responsibility devolves upon every spiritual son of the patriarch. We, too, are called upon to mediate the blessings of true religion to an idolatrous generation. People still cling to their "gods" with the utmost tenacity. But the blind determination of a misguided imagination must be eclipsed by the dauntless courage of a world-conquering faith in the God of Abraham. Every member of the spiritual priesthood is to be a light-bearer in a dark and sinful world, witnessing in one way or another to the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. No one is exempt from service, and no real Christian wants to be exempt. Let us thank God for those who, out of a deep sense of consecration and whole-souled devotion to the cause of Christ, have gone forth from the parental home to witness for Him in far and distant lands. We are no less grateful for the home missionary and for the

leaders in our congregations and their faithful people, who are doing everything in their power to strengthen the base of operations in the homeland. Ultimately the victory will be ours. Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Briefly stated, the call of Abraham is an event of the first importance in Hebrew religion. How God called the patriarch is not explained. We are told that God "spoke to Abram." The reference here is probably to a theophany. But the dream, or "vision of the night," is also a possible factor. Whatever it was, we may rest assured that the call was not the product of imagination or that it proceeded from the speculations of a contemplative mind. The worship of the one true God did not grow out of the conviction that there must be something higher and better in religion than the man-made gods of Babylonia. Jehovah is not the mental abstraction of a man seeking a unifying principle in religion. Abraham's pilgrimage to the land of promise is more than the reaction of a religious mind against the nature-worship of idolatrous Mesopotamia. His heroic faith in the living God is not begotten of philosophic speculation. Religion is not philosophy. It is an experience of spiritual realities. God, in some way, made Himself known to Abraham, spoke to him and sent him on his mission. The God of Abraham is still a living reality in the religious consciousness of God's people. He has become more real to us since the days of Jesus, who made known to us the very heart of God. He dwells in our hearts, speaks to our conscience and sends us on our spiritual pilgrimage.

## II

## THE CALL OF MOSES

### Exodus 3-4

MOSES, too, is a prophet; indeed, the first genuine prophet of his people. Speaking of the emancipator of enslaved Israel, Hosea says, "By a prophet Jehovah brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was Israel preserved" (12:13). During the lifetime of Moses the spirit of prophecy was bestowed upon a select number of the elders of Israel. Numbers 11:25 relates that God took of the spirit that was upon Moses, and gave it unto the seventy elders, "And it came to pass that they began to prophesy." This prophetic activity of Moses shall not suffer for want of a more or less regular succession of men, divinely inspired of God, who as fit instruments of divine revelation, shall declare God's purposes concerning Israel. The culminating point of Hebrew prophecy is reached, of course, in the Prophet of Nazareth. In Deut. 18:18 we read, "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and I will put My words into his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."

In keeping with the promise to Abraham, God was educating the descendants of the patriarch to become the channel of divine revelation, through which He would ultimately reveal Himself to the nations of the earth; and in order that oppressed Israel might not prove untrue to its calling, He raised up a man with peculiar qualifications for the tremendous task to which he was called. Realizing

the difficulties of the task set before him, Moses naturally shrank from a work, involving the consolidation of the disjected members of the tribes of Israel into a compact nation with a great national and religious purpose. But, be it said to his lasting praise, he came forth at last, under the compulsion of the divine call, as the deliverer of oppressed Israel. His response to the call, as we learn from the Epistle to the Hebrews, was nothing short of a venture of faith in the living God, " for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible " (11:27).

A brief study of the call of Moses will be of special interest to every prospective candidate for the ministry. It brings us into the sanctuary of God's presence, and shows us how the invisible, yet ever-present God still comes near to choose servants for His work.

In the account of the call of Moses (Ex. 3 and 4), a Hebrew shepherd, keeping the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law, in the vicinity of Horeb, reverently turns aside for a moment to see and investigate a most unusual natural phenomenon. But what is it that he sees? A thorny acacia bush enveloped in flames, but, strange to say, the bush remains unconsumed. But presently the burning bush is converted into a sanctuary, for lo and behold, he hears himself addressed by name like Samuel (I Sam. 3:10), and St. Paul (Acts 9:4), the voice calling out, " Moses, Moses! " This is the personal call with which the prophet's commission begins, and to which he returns a ready answer, saying, " Here am I."

A vision of the Eternal is still vouchsafed to every believing heart. To the eye of faith every common bush is aglow with God, Christian experience being the avenue of approach to the very threshold of His sacred presence. Where is the man with but a spark of religion in his soul, who has not at one time or another been thrilled by the sudden outshining of spiritual light and power? Is it pos-

sible, in the light of almost twenty centuries of Christian experience, not to speak of an equal number of years of Old Testament history, for any young man to say that God has never spoken to his inmost soul? Any so-called Christian young man, who makes such a preposterous claim, has never taken the trouble to turn aside and examine the glorious facts of our most holy religion. A willing disposition on his part reverently to turn aside, and to draw near, as Moses drew near, so that God may speak to him, will lead to a vision of Him, who is nearer to us than hands and feet. A vision of the Almighty is always dependent upon the measure of our receptivity, and not upon any unwillingness on God's part to reveal Himself and to make known His will. God is an ever-present fact in human experience. But alas! only few are prepared to meet the conditions leading to such an experience; and hence, comparatively speaking, there is a lack of vision, which in reality is nothing more than a symptom of religious and spiritual declension in the individual soul. Oh for greater readiness to hear the voice of God speaking to us in divers ways! Elijah, on Mount Horeb, for example, hears nothing but the "still small voice," alluded to in I Kings 19. To some the call may come through the deeper meaning of bereavement. To others, God may speak by inspiring their hearts and minds with His revealed truth. Or He may reveal and manifest Himself to a man's conscience, awakened to a compelling sense of his duty to God and man.

But the call of the prophet is not as yet complete. The mere mention of his name is only the beginning of his divine commission. In his approach to the burning bush, he is cautioned not to draw too near without observing the usual religious custom of removing his sandals upon entering a sanctuary, as a symbol of becoming reverence and religious awe. Is there not in this for us the lesson that in

the presence of a holy God we must lay aside some things? In other words, we must divest ourselves of all irreverence, idle curiosity, self-reliance, and pride. Humility before God is the path to the highest preferment, and reverence, to the closest intimacy. How often this truth is forgotten by those ministering in holy things. One indication of this is the irreverent curiosity of certain types of theological science. Science, to be sure, has resulted in many temporal blessings, but along with these we have reaped a harvest of religious irreverence. The old foundations, they tell us, have given way to a new interpretation of life; nothing is sure, nothing is certain; the sanctions of religion depend upon a human source.

This blatant type of so-called scholarship, with all its irreverence, has in some cases found its way into the sanctuary, heedless of the solemn admonition, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." These moderns rush in, so to speak, where angels fear to tread, unmindful of the fact that spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. Along with all this came the levelling process of an exaggerated individualism; the levelling influence of democracy has also done its part in bringing about this change in the attitude toward religion. The majority of our youth have no idea how much nearer God seemed to the fathers than to their children; how much more compelling seemed the services of religion and with what reverence our forefathers listened to the voice of the ministry. But in spite of all these changes the reverent Biblical scholar of today realizes that he is dealing with holy things. Happily the Christian ministry is not altogether lacking in reverent preachers. They still stand on holy ground, dispensing the means of grace to reverent worshippers. Men still feel that when their God-fearing pastor prays, he is prostrating himself before a holy God.

Meanwhile God announces Himself to His reverent worshipper at the mount of God, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. I have surely seen the affliction of My people in Egypt, and I am come down to deliver them." Ultimately, of course, it is Israel's God that delivers His people, but He operates largely by human means. Throughout the whole scheme of divine economy, God, although here and there He may speak directly to an individual chosen of Him for a definite work, generally speaks to man through human agency. This is only another way of saying that "we are co-labourers together with God" in the evangelization of the world. Accordingly, the God of the patriarchs, in remembrance of His covenant with Abraham and his descendants, designates Moses to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian oppression. The man selected for this mighty task was a former courtier of Levitic extraction, whose education had been supplemented by the isolation of his shepherd-life in the solitudes of Midian, thus affording ample time for the mellowing and maturing process of meditation and communion with God. Thus equipped, God not only calls him, but also at the same time commissions him, saying, "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people out of Egypt." Religion, in the case of Moses, is not to begin and end in the mere contemplation of a miraculous event. The flaming bush has a message, bidding him to serve the Lord whom he is worshipping. He is to be a missionary to the clans of Goshen. As God's messenger and spokesman he is to plead the cause of his people before Pharaoh, and to lead the liberated slaves into a land flowing with milk and honey.

In like manner the contemplation of our personal salvation as a work of divine grace may thrill our hearts with religious ecstasy and boundless joy. But if our religion is

to be worth anything, it must be a religion in action, for we are saved to serve. If our faith be genuine, the fruits of faith will not be lacking. Does it mean nothing to us that untold millions of precious souls are groaning under the grinding exactions of sin? Is the search of heathen multitudes, groaning in the dark for thousands of years for some ray of light that might lead them to God, less real to us than the enslavement of Israel in Egypt for a period of four hundred years? Why do these awful facts stare us in the face today? The reason is not far to seek. The gospel-call for deliverers went forth no less than nineteen hundred years ago, but only a comparatively small number of God-fearing men and women has responded to the call of service at home and abroad. I fail to understand how any qualified young man with a conscience can turn his back upon the Macedonian calls of our own time. Somewhere I read that he is thinking of the flesh-pots of Egypt. Shame on him! Or is he saying, to hide his low earth-born ideals, or lack of ideals, that he can do just as much good as a consecrated business man in the land of Midian? What a subterfuge! For who has a right to substitute his own personal wishes for that higher call to service which comes from the Almighty?

Is Moses equal to the task? Of course not, for who is sufficient unto these things? For one thing, Moses is only a man, and a poor shepherd at that, with all the buoyancy of his youth entirely gone by virtue of his excruciating experiences in Egypt. Not a vestige of his former impetuosity remains. Several decades before, the poor man did not know that he could not save his people by methods of his own choosing. How fitting, therefore, that he should be separated for a time from the military atmosphere of an Egyptian palace, and trained by the beneficent influences of exilic isolation for the high duties which lay before him. But even so; no one is better able than he

fully to appreciate what it means to appear before mighty Pharaoh with such a request. Not even the prince of the royal household would dare to approach the throne of the Egyptian monarch with a request threatening the subversion of the whole economic system of the most powerful nation on earth! "And who am I," he says, "that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

Let not those who halt between two opinions, and stumble over the self-invented difficulties of most ordinary lives think hardly of the faltering faith of Moses in the face of a task before which any ordinary man would quail and tremble. Deeply conscious of his own weakness, he pleads his unfitness for such a mission. God, who does not repudiate his self-depreciation, hereupon assures him of His presence and help, saying, "Certainly I will be with thee." Moses versus Pharaoh would be a hopeless cause, but God and Moses versus Pharaoh is quite another thing. How reassuring, therefore, is the promise, "Certainly I will be with thee." I will be to thee a never-failing source of surpassing strength and power. Thus equipped, Moses did not have to calculate the difference between his weakness and the prowess of a world empire. Success in any religious enterprise is not conditioned by the mere accident of birth, of social position, and of earthly rank, "but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." Let us not forget that while mere externals may tend to the furtherance of religion among certain classes, they are by no means indispensable to ministerial success. No one will deny that some of the best ministers of the gospel have come from the most humble walks of life. Men of faith from the lower ranks of society may do as much as the greatest dignitary of the realm, to subdue kingdoms, and put to "flight the armies of the aliens." Everything depends upon the promise, "I will be with thee." Jehovah incar-

nate claims the right to bestow upon us the same encouragement, when He says, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Moses, however, anticipating a real difficulty, which might cause him considerable embarrassment upon his arrival in Egypt, continues, "When I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them?" In other words, If I should say to the Israelites, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, they will say, That is a tremendous claim to make, prove your commission, show us your credentials. Inasmuch as the God of the fathers has revealed Himself in times past under various names, such as El, El-Shaddai (God Almighty), El-Elyon (God Most High), Yahweh (the Jehovah of our English Bible), and Elohim, under which of these names has God revealed Himself to you? Could it be possible that the Hebrew slaves, in their dreary bondage, had become intellectually and morally dwarfed to such an extent that, under the influence of their idolatrous surroundings, they had lost much of their ancestral faith, and had in many instances begun to worship the nature-deities of Egypt? In this way they would learn to know the names of many of the Egyptian gods, for each deity had its own name. Had the knowledge of the true God, in the course of four hundred years of servitude, begun to fade from the memory of a majority of the people, so that Moses felt that to indicate in a general way their ancestral God would not sufficiently distinguish Him from the idols of Egypt, whose worship had infected their ranks?

However that may be, the Lord is prompt in meeting this new difficulty of Moses by revealing to him the name of Yahweh, or Jehovah, by which He desires to be known henceforth by His people. This name of God, although

known to the patriarchs, receives a fuller meaning. His personal name is explained by the promise, " I will be with thee." To understand what is implied in the name itself, we must remember that a new turning-point has been reached in the history of redemption. This is rendered possible by the fact that the God of the fathers will reveal Himself to the enslaved descendants of the patriarchs by a series of mighty acts, culminating in the liberation of those in bondage. If God will be with Moses in the work to which he has been called, He will likewise be with His people to help them, and to lead them out of Egypt with a strong and outstretched arm. Thus it will be seen that the name " Yahweh " has a practical, rather than a metaphysical, meaning. It contains the practical and faith-inspiring truth that the work of liberation, inaugurated by the prophet, would be duly accomplished, because it had the support of Israel's God.

The revelation of God's name is followed by a very practical suggestion regarding the method of procedure in such a case. The prophet is bidden to communicate, upon his arrival in Egypt, with the elders, the regularly constituted authorities of his people, for it is necessary that he should acquaint them with his plans and to present to them, as it were, his credentials. Their co-operation would assure a good beginning for his work. The course of subsequent events abundantly demonstrated the wisdom of the admonition given to Moses, as is seen from the unqualified enthusiasm with which the elders supported the enterprise. It is interesting to note in this connection that Moses is not a law unto himself. There is no divine sanction for the blundering zeal and the utter disregard of all authority, whether ecclesiastical or otherwise, on the part of certain fanatics claiming direct illumination from the Holy Spirit, and a special commission to preach the gospel. Since when, let me ask, has the Holy Spirit ceased to

function through the Church? The man with a genuine call is not unwilling to submit his credentials for the approval of the Church. Was ever a commission more direct than that of Moses? And yet he is willing to prove to the representatives of the people that he is no self-constituted prophet.

But before doing this, Moses anticipates another difficulty. After four hundred years of slavery, the tidings of their sudden emancipation might be too much for their weakened faith. They had already suffered so many disappointments that they would not be likely to credit the probability of their deliverance from the cruellest system of oppression ever devised by the wicked ingenuity of man. If they showed little inclination to believe in such a possibility forty years ago, they would evince the same scepticism now. No, "they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, Jehovah hath not appeared unto thee." In the present state of their faith, a message, including the revelation of the divine nature, unaccompanied by signs and wonders, would fail of a hearing. As a prop to the faith of his people, as well as to strengthen his own, Moses is empowered to work signs and wonders in attestation of his divine commission.

What follows is an indication of the importance of eloquence among the ancients. Moses suddenly remembers his lack of persuasive powers, and he hesitates. The man who wields a wonder-working rod in the sight of the children of Israel and before Pharaoh must be capable of moving the hearts of those assembled to hear him and, humanly speaking, the success or failure of his great and perilous task would largely depend upon his ability to move the heart of Pharaoh. He was diffident of his powers as a speaker, and thought that he would be unable to persuade either Pharaoh or his own countrymen. Not experiencing any improvement in this regard since the

beginning of his interview with Jehovah, he says, "O my Lord, I am not a man of words, neither heretofore, nor since Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant, but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." God meets his objection by declaring that his want of eloquence will be supplied by divine Omnipotence. "Who hath made man's mouth? Have not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." What a sublime answer! That the Creator has an absolute right to the energies and gifts of the creature is an argument that is absolutely unanswerable. Moreover, cannot the Creator of all things touch with eloquence the lips which He has fashioned? But since real prophecy is not a question of mere words, God can send a great message by a man of slow speech. Moses is not to be a man of words, but of action.

For, after all, real eloquence is not a matter of fluent utterance, but of ideas, thoughts and emotions based on a vision of things eternal and unseen; and last, but not least, of rock-bottom convictions formed in the crucible of actual experience. A man, thus endowed, although of slow speech, and even, like St. Paul, of contemptible speech (II Cor. 10: 10), may accomplish, with God's help, a work of titanic proportions. The words of such a man are like the blows of a mighty hammer that smiteth the rock in pieces. They are not made, but born out of a great experience. Let no man who feels within him the ministerial call be deterred by the thought that he is "slow of speech and of a slow tongue." Slowness of speech is not an absolute disqualification for the ministry of reconciliation. All things being equal, God will "be with his mouth," so that souls may be won for the kingdom.

Now that the attention of Moses has been directed to this fact, one would suppose that he would ere long be on his way to the fulfilment of the divine call. But, no; his

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excessive diffidence and humility lead him to excuse himself without assigning any definite reason why he should be excused other than to suggest the sending in his stead of a person better qualified for the work. Did he commit the sin of self-distrust because he was unable to see the wisdom of God's choice? Was the deficiency of which he complained, caused by the natural shyness of a lonely shepherd living in the solitudes of Midian? The occupation of a shepherd does not, as a rule, furnish the necessary presuppositions for facility of expression. If he ever did possess the gift of persuasive speech in the palmy days of Egypt, he has practically lost it by disuse. Moreover, one abortive attempt to rescue the Israelites is enough, not that he is a coward exactly; it takes more than an ordinary man to throw in his lot with a despised race, " choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

But there is one thing that he cannot endure, and that is, the jibes and jeers of the very men whom he wanted to rescue. Perhaps they were right; he is not the superman that he once thought he was. He cannot even command the respect of an audience, much less arouse his auditors to action by the gift of oratory. Had he possessed wonderful oratorical ability, and less muscular energy, on a certain occasion when his sense of justice was aroused, he might have succeeded better. He lacks self-confidence, and worse still, faith in God. He therefore prays to be left in obscurity. " And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Moses, and He said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well." Moses at last surrenders himself to the divine will, and is prepared, in conjunction with Aaron, to undertake his great mission. Called of God, the timorous listener obeys the voice speaking to him out of the burning bush, and yields himself without reserve to the service of God.

Before concluding this part of our study, we deem it our duty to remark that the call of Moses and its lessons cannot be ignored with impunity by the young man of today. These are the days when the Church of Christ is calling for more men to man her pulpits and to build up the waste places of Zion at home and abroad. My brother, are you in doubt as to what application you should make of the incidents and events recorded in the third and fourth chapters of the book of Exodus? Are you saying to yourself, The circumstances attending the call of Moses are quite remote from the experiences of my own life? I have never seen a bush anywhere flaming unburned, or heard a miraculous voice calling to me from its midst. The reason is, that you do not need it. The average young man in the Church of Jesus Christ is afflicted with the spirit of self-excusing; he cannot serve his Lord in the capacity of a prophet, he cannot enter the ministry, because he has never been audibly and visibly called to that form of service, as if the Almighty were limited to the direct method of calling a man in a miraculous way to the work of the ministry. It is a most pitiful thing that a man should read of Moses being miraculously called to a definite work, and forget that he himself is also a subject of divine grace. Has God no message for you, my friend? Ah, yes; He may speak to you in the twentieth century through the burning bush. Your burning bush is the Bible, containing a long series of historical revelations. You may visit it at any time and hear God's voice speaking out of it. It will open up to you numerous avenues to the approach of present duty, for, as we have already seen, God reveals Himself to us by historical precedent as well as by the practical experiences of Christian truth.

It is the duty of every man, to whom a special vocation presents itself, to ask himself the question, "Dare I, at the peril of my soul's salvation, refuse the call of the Al-

mighty?" Is it for me to say whom the Lord in His infinite wisdom should choose for His work? Did God make a mistake in calling Moses with all his splendid endowments? What Moses wanted was the gift of extraordinary powers for an extraordinary work. And yet, although he was not a man of many words and outstanding oratorical ability, the Lord could make use of him. Had Moses been willing to undertake the task assigned him, without a special spokesman in the person of his brother, who as a speaker was above the average, he might have been led on in course of time, by patient practice and in reliance upon God's help, to the eloquence of which he pronounced himself destitute. Time and opportunity, plus God's grace, would be sure to bring about some improvement in a prophet of slow tongue so that the work to which he is called may not suffer. Moses, failing to realize this, sinned, but repented of his procrastination by addressing himself to the immediate accomplishment of his noble task. Brother, can we, in the face of all the good that we can do by a ready compliance with the divine will, afford to sin against the Holy Ghost by refusing to work for Him when called? To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Many are not responding to the divine call. Their own consciences accuse them of sinful procrastination. Let me admonish you to fling to the winds all personal considerations, all likes and dislikes, for God is calling you. In the latter half of the fourth chapter of the book of Exodus, where mention is made of the return of Moses to Egypt, we have these words, "And Moses went." Go, and do likewise.

## III

# THE CALL OF SAMUEL

### I Samuel 3

IN the third chapter of the first book of Samuel there is recorded the call of a boy prophet, vowed and consecrated by a pious mother to the service of the Lord. Regarding her firstborn as a loan from the Lord and Giver of life, Hannah brought him in tender youth to the temple at Shiloh, where he might "minister unto the Lord before Eli." That Hannah had made no mistake in dedicating her son to the Lord is seen by his exemplary life and conduct in the midst of a perfunctory priesthood and of an idolatrous people. In the eyes of the people he was subsequently looked upon as a second Moses, who by his prayers and energetic deeds saved his people from political and religious disaster at the hands of the Philistines.

The opening verses of our chapter point to the conditions of the time in which Samuel was called to this distinguished service. We hear of a scarcity of divine revelations, or public prophetic utterances. "The word of Jehovah was rare in those days; there was no open vision." The official representatives of religion showed little aptitude for the higher interests of religion. Eli, in his old age, had lost his grip on Hophni and Phineas, who by their moral laxity and self-indulgence defiled their priestly robes. The sin of this good-natured old man was the sin of omission. His omission of parental restraint permitted the unchecked play of youthful insolence and excess. And so, when these self-willed, obstinate, and overbearing

young men had grown to man's estate, they failed to respond to the feeble remonstrances of old age. Dissolute pleasure-seekers were among their friends and companions. The effect of their evil example upon the masses was appalling, thus reminding us once more of the prophetic saying, " Like priest, like people." It was at this time that idolatry raised its head again, with all its attendant evils.

What some of these evils were is quite apparent from the subsequent reformation of Israel's religion, alluded to in I Sam. 7: 3-4, where the male and female deities of Canaanitish nature-worship are discarded: " Samuel, however, spoke to the whole house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto Jehovah with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoroth from among you, and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away the Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served Jehovah alone." The Philistines, ever alert for an opportunity to vanquish the hill tribes of Ephraim and of Judah, took advantage of Israel's moral and spiritual decay. In the sequel, Israel suffered a crushing defeat, Hophni and Phineas were slain in battle, and Eli expired upon hearing the news of the disastrous outcome of the battle. The bitterness of such a defeat was aggravated by the certainty of virtual enslavement; worse still, Philistine domination threatened the very existence of Israel's national religion. In this terrible crisis of the nation Samuel, the boy prophet, addressed himself to the task of laying the foundations for the restoration of the lost fortunes of the house of Israel. He wrought upon the national conscience until the people were ready to put away their idols and return to Jehovah. The result was that they achieved a most remarkable victory over their enemies.

Samuel, through the exercise of his prophetic function, had done more than anyone else to break the yoke of Philistine oppression. Doubtless he is the most conspicu-

ous personage, after Moses, in the history of Israel. He towers far above his contemporaries, not even excluding King Saul, who trembled at the prophet's rebuke. Greatness, after all, is not a matter of so many cubits, but of inward piety and of strength of character. This, by the way, accounts for Saul's rejection. In I Sam. 15:22-23 the prophet says, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king." It was for a similar reason that Hophni and Phineas went to their doom. God removed them from their office, not because they were wanting in originality of thought, or because they were behind the age, in which they lived. A theoretical "dead-line" had nothing to do with their rejection whatsoever. On the contrary, they were in the prime of life, and in the possession of their full mental powers. They may even have been men of extraordinary oratorical ability. And yet, in spite of every natural endowment, they were displaced by a mere youth, because they were morally corrupt. Lack of character cannot be atoned for by a profusion of natural gifts. Rather be a consecrated, humble servant, ministering to the needs of Eli, than a brilliant, but irreverent son of the chief priest in the land. Rather be faithful in little things, like the humble "acolyte" in the temple, than unfaithful in the highest office of either Church or State.

As regards Samuel's preparation for his great work, the first lesson that forces itself upon our attention is, "Let no one despise the day of little things." Samuel, in early youth, while ministering unto the Lord before Eli, took kindly to the duties of his lowly station. The menial tasks of daily routine were performed with a sense of loving devotion to the Lord of the sanctuary. At the break of day, for example, young Samuel had to open the doors of the temple enclosure, trim the lamps on the seven-

branched candlestick, and fill them with pure olive oil. He then received his instructions for the day from the aged priest, whose dimness of sight and increasing infirmities rendered him largely dependent upon his faithful attendant. Part of his duties in the evening consisted in closing the doors of the sanctuary, and in lighting the lamps in the holy place. The years of his minority are all characterized by the same faithfulness in the performance of present duty. How many years elapsed before he heard the Lord's voice in the temple we cannot say. Josephus, in his *Jewish Antiquities* (V. 10, 4) states that this event took place when Samuel was twelve years of age. This age is quite within the limits of the meaning of the word *na'ar* which, according to Hebrew usage, may denote not only a child, but also a youth or a young man.

At all events, verse fifteen of our chapter shows that he was no longer a mere child, otherwise he would not have been entrusted with the keys of the sacred enclosure. With the heavy locks then in use, the strength of no mere child would have sufficed for such a task. But what we are more particularly interested in at present is to show that during all these years he came into daily contact with holy things. Through daily contact with Eli he doubtless learned many things concerning the religion of the fathers, which were stored in a receptive, pious heart. Under Eli's eye and tutorship, he increased in stature and in favour with God and man (2:26; *cf.* Luke 2:52). Familiarity with holy things did not, as in the case of Hophni and Phineas, breed contempt; on the contrary, it resulted in ever-increasing devotion to God's service. This is why Samuel was preferred above the sons of Eli, whose vision of things unseen, if they ever did possess it, was obscured by the sin of licentious self-indulgence. Faithful in little, he was entrusted with more, God calling him to a higher service.

By way of practical application, we would observe that a period of special preparation generally precedes the call to any form of service, really worth while. This is true of the Christian ministry, no less than in the world of industry. Such a period of preparation means faithfulness in little things; it means "line upon line, and precept upon precept."

Another point to be noted is that the call of God came to Samuel along the path of present duty. His daily work consisted of a series of lowly deeds and menial services rendered out of love to God. As an attendant at the sanctuary, he slept within the sacred precincts, probably in one of the adjoining chambers reserved for the personnel of the temple. One night, "ere the lamp of God went out in the temple," he was awakened by a voice, calling to him, "Samuel, Samuel; and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he said, I called not; lie down again." Again the voice sounded a second and a third time with the same result. Thus far no mention is made of a vision. Samuel heard a voice calling him by name. Apparently the voice was not audible, at least not to old Eli, whose faint slumbers remained undisturbed. It spoke to Samuel's inmost soul with ever-increasing impressiveness. When Eli's youthful servant came the third time, persisting that he had been called, he finally perceived that it was a divine call, and he told him the meaning of the voice and the answer he must make in the event of his being called a fourth time. "And Jehovah came and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak, for Thy servant heareth." Three times the voice sounded and each time the boy mistook God's voice for Eli's. He had not yet learned to know Jehovah by direct and conscious revelation. But when spoken to a fourth time, he recognized in the voice which seemed to

have drawn nearer, his Maker's voice, and he responded with his characteristic humility and obedience to the voice of his master, whether human or divine, " Speak, for Thy servant heareth."

As it is the duty of the servant to serve, he hears, not to argue, but to serve. The message which he receives is in substantial agreement with the one conveyed to Eli's ears, some years before, by " a man of God." As might be expected, Samuel is in no haste to relate to his kind old master the painful message which he has received. There is no exulting here over the downfall of a superior! It was only after Eli summoned him into his presence, and out of a sense of duty to God, that he made known to him the full contents of the message. By his call, the boy Samuel had become a man, ready to take up the stern duties of his prophetic office. The dawn of a new day was at hand. Prior to this, Samuel's service was confined to attendance on the aged priest at Shiloh. But now, as an instrument attuned to the sound of God's revealing voice, he is raised to a higher form of service. Formerly he had waited on man, now he waits on God ready to do His will. From now on, until the close of his life, he is the recognized channel of divine revelation, and the interpreter of God's will to the people.

The call of Samuel suggests, for our consideration, several lessons of value. We note, in passing, that he received his early education in the temple at Shiloh. Part of his early training consisted in daily attendance upon the services of God's house. From what we know of his character we are safe in assuming that he took a deep interest in all that pertained to the service, its ceremonies, sacrifices, and sacred ordinances. Although he was unable at his age to comprehend the meaning of the sacred ritual, the sacrifices at the altar, expressing in a concrete form the prayerful aspirations of the soul, must have made a pro-

found impression upon his receptive mind. The temple ritual, which was no more than a meaningless form to Hophni and Phineas, exerted an elevating and purifying influence upon the boy. He soon learned to know by heart precious portions of Israel's history, either recited by the priest from memory, or read from the sacred parchment, constituting, aside from the ark, Israel's most priceless treasure. To us, the practical lesson is, Let no one belittle the value of such religious exercises in the period of childhood. The normal development of Samuel's character indicates that the impressions of childhood are lasting. Who will attempt to measure the sacred influences emanating from the lispings of divine truth, whether in the form of precept or ritual? Let all parents, who are saying to themselves, My child is too young to go to Sunday-school, or church, remember the example of Hannah, who, after weaning her boy at the age of three or four, brought him to the temple at Shiloh. Woe to the parents who neglect to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord! The far-reaching effects of a Christian environment, whether in the home, in Sunday-school, or in the church, and in the catechetical class, cannot be over-estimated. Why are the theological seminaries of Christendom lacking Samuels today? Because the Hannah-type of mother is on the wane. If God spoke to Samuel, He will speak to every consecrated son of God's spiritual Israel.

We all realize, of course, that the mere mechanical repetition of religious truths and symbols in early childhood is not the height and flower of religious experience. The promptings of religion in the child must lead to something higher; they must lead step by step to the upbuilding of character and the deepening of religious convictions. In other words, there must come to the growing child, or youth, as a token of his spiritual ripeness, a call from God.

setting him apart for Christian service. That call generally comes with repeated emphasis to many a consecrated youth, who has an ear to hear. It comes once, twice, thrice, yea, a fourth time at eventide, or toward early morning, in the time of quiet contemplation, when the inner voice is best heard; or it may come nearer and nearer, and speak to us with convincing power, so that we almost feel as if God were laying His hand upon us in order to make known to us our high prophetic destiny. Unfortunately, like Samuel, we often at first mistake God's voice for Eli's, and believing it to be a human voice, we fail to return the proper answer. We lie down again to sleep and only too often our convictions and fleeting resolves come to nothing. Oh, that at such a crisis some kind-hearted, intelligent Eli were about to interpret to us not only the meaning of the voice but also at the same time to teach us to say, "Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth."

Our proneness to mistake the divine call for a human voice is partly due to the fact that Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and others each heard the divine voice differently. At one time God may speak to a receptive heart in Mesopotamia, at another, to a reverent inquirer through a flaming bush, at still another, in the hushed silence of the night to a consecrated youth in the temple at Shiloh, or through the pressure of circumstances. Life is full of God's voices, but for lack of spiritual discernment they are not heard. When we think of God's voice we immediately think of the revelation of God's will in the Bible. Truly, God calls many young men by the ministry of the Word. But how are these calls received? The youthful reader of the Bible will look upon the divine call as having been spoken by the voice of the Lord or of Jesus to men living two or three thousand years ago, and therefore not applicable to him in any special sense. The youthful church attendant looks upon the call of God audibly articulated by every faithful

preacher of the gospel as the voice of the minister which is directed at no one in particular. Or, he may even, under the momentary flush of a fleeting enthusiasm, say, as Samuel did, "Here am I," only to desert the Lord of the temple for the gains of the market-place, or for the transient pleasures of a selfish and sin-cursed world.

Or, if he comes at all to listen and to worship with any degree of regularity the repetition of God's call to the ministry soon loses its impressiveness; he comes to church, not to hear and obey, but to hear in order to relegate what he has heard into the sphere of blissful forgetfulness. His pre-occupied mind is not in the posture really to listen and to obey the divine call. If he is at all perplexed as to the meaning of the voice which he has heard, instead of going to Eli, or to some competent interpreter of the voice, he soon contracts the harmful habit of listening for miraculous voices and of sleeping to dream. The result is that the miraculous voice of Jehovah does not become audible to the senses. Why not take all such perplexities, doubts, and silent questionings to God in prayer? This is what Paul did after his remarkable experience on the road to Damascus. He says, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." He did not immediately confer with the elders of the Jewish Sanhedrin, nor with the elders of the mother church at Jerusalem. If he had consulted the former we can readily surmise what might have happened; if he had gone to the latter before subjecting himself to a season of prayer, they would have questioned most seriously the motives of their formidable inquisitor. I rather think he conferred first of all with the Lord. And well he might, for He is the only infallible interpreter as to what our lifework should be. But to ascertain God's will in the matter we must possess an open mind and a sincere heart. With such a state of heart, God's voice will speak again to our inner consciousness, and in His divine presence we

will be ready to exclaim, "Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth." Young man, you will attain your majority not at the usual age of twenty-one; in the eyes of God your full manhood begins at the moment in which you know that God is speaking to you. Let God lead you to your lifework, and if it is a call to the ministry, learn to obey that call with the willing obedience of a Samuel.

"Still, as of old, Thy precious word
Is by the nations dimly heard;
The hearts its holiness hath stirred
Are weak and few.
Wise men the secret dare not tell;
Still in Thy temple slumbers well
Good Eli: O, like Samuel,
Lord, here am I!

"Few years, no wisdom, no renown,
Only my life can I lay down;
Only my heart, Lord, to Thy throne
I bring; and pray
A child of Thine I may go forth,
And spread glad tidings through the earth,
And teach sad hearts to know Thy worth!
Lord, here am I!"

## IV

## THE CALL OF AMOS

### Amos 3:7-8; 7:15

THE shepherd Amos came from the ranks of the common people under the compulsion of the divine call. Amos, however, was a very uncommon man. He has the distinction of being the first prophet whose utterances were recorded by himself and handed down to our time in the form of a book which has come to be regarded as a Hebrew classic. His book is a work of no common literary merit; it is one of the best examples of pure Hebrew style. Many of our older commentators do our prophet a grave injustice by representing him as an uncouth rustic, lacking in literary refinement, because of a defective education. This supposed literary deficiency really goes back to Jerome's worthless verdict on the literary style of Amos, expressed in his introduction to the book of Amos. Arguing from the prophet's humble antecedents, Jerome expresses the opinion that he was "rude in speech" (*imperitus sermone*). This statement is not borne out by the facts. It is true, his figures of speech are taken from rural life, but they are all used with telling force and with the utmost skill. Being a shepherd, he would as a matter of course make frequent use of words and expressions suggested by his calling. But in the presentation of his ideas he is sometimes so skillful that one would hardly believe him identical with the shepherd and husbandman of Tekoa. He was a most remarkable man, and not the untutored rustic some would have us believe he was.

Let us, therefore, have done once and for all, with all attempts to belittle the education of the prophet Amos in order to magnify the work of divine inspiration. God, in inspiring his prophets, does not, as some would suppose, put a premium upon ignorance. The prophecy of Amos shows that inspiration does not utterly destroy a man's individuality, much less his vocabulary and mode of thought. Although Amos was not a member of one of the prophetic guilds of his day, composed for the most part of flattering soothsayers and fortune-tellers, prophesying for gain, and working themselves up periodically into a morbid state of ecstatic frenzy, he was by no means devoid of the essentials of an education such as his own time afforded. His social position was no bar to his equipping himself with the culture of the day. He was thoroughly familiar with the history of the chosen race. He knew the history of Abraham, of Moses, and of Samuel, his epoch-making predecessors in the prophetic office. He was a keen observer of the trend of things, and soon learned to wield a ready pen. As the first outstanding prophet since the time of Samuel, and as the first of the great literary prophets of the eighth and succeeding centuries, he, too, may be said to usher in a new era in the religious history of Israel. That he was not looked upon as an uneducated shepherd by his brilliant successors in the prophetic office is seen from the influence he exerted on the writings of Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others. The life of a shepherd does not disqualify a man from becoming a great prophet; Abraham and Moses, be it remembered in passing, were shepherds.

The home of Amos was in Tekoa, a small village situated on a commanding hill, six miles south of Bethlehem. By occupation he was a shepherd and a fig-cultivator. He was engaged in rearing a species of sheep prized for the excellence of their wool. As a wool-grower he naturally

sought the markets of the land, where he came into contact with the merchants of Israel and Judah, and with tradesmen hailing from the surrounding countries. Centres of population, such as Bethel, Jerusalem, Gilgal, Samaria, and Damascus afforded numerous opportunities for a closer acquaintance with the prevailing social and religious conditions of his time. Blessed as he was with a religious conscience, he doubtless returned with a heavy heart to the quiet simplicity of Tekoa, brooding over the wickedness and folly of a misguided and superficial people.

What were some of the conditions, you ask, of the time in which the prophet lived? Although born in the land of Judah, Amos selected the northern kingdom as the scene of his ministry, possibly for the reason that Israel, in the prophet's time, was more important than Judah. Consequently we shall limit ourselves to a brief description of the political, social, and religious conditions prevailing in the North at about the middle of the eighth century B. C.

Politically, Israel enjoyed an almost unprecedented era of peace and prosperity. Jeroboam II (781-740 B. C.) and his victorious army had succeeded in silencing Israel's hereditary enemies. The ancient borders were restored, and part of the territory of Damascus became tributary, all of which tended to the economic enrichment of the land. Israel had become a wealthy commercial power, and men with an eye to business began to congratulate themselves upon the glorious success of the splendid reign of Jeroboam the Second.

But political success, achieved by force of arms, generally reacts upon the social life of the victors. A group of courtiers and nobles soon constituted a landed aristocracy at the expense of poor farmers who, for one reason or another, had been obliged to borrow money or grain at exorbitant rates. Numerous foreclosures resulted in the creation of vast estates in defiance of the principles of

brotherhood. The absorption of small holdings by unscrupulous creditors often meant, not only the impoverishment but also the enslavement of the insolvent creditor and his family. In the cities dishonest merchants were growing rich by fraudulent means. In the mad haste after riches men then, as now, would stoop to all sorts of questionable methods to attain their object. Even judges could be approached and bribed by wealthy defendants. Palatial houses were erected by the rising aristocracy with money extorted from the poor. Among the luxurious appointments in these mansions we find couches inlaid with ivory brought from distant lands. The wealthy grandees and their wives lived on the fat of the land. Not content with cups, they drank wine out of huge bowls amid delicate perfumes and frivolous music, vocal and instrumental. A luxuriously inclined womanhood, we are sorry to add, had its guilty share in the general decline of social morality.

But the shameless immorality, of which the prophet speaks with such manly indignation (2:7), must be ascribed, in part at least, to certain obscene practices associated with Canaanitish nature-worship, which had become a part of Israel's worship. Think of the awful monstrosity of worshipping Jehovah, the God of Israel, in the form of a calf! The priests of Bethel and of Dan would probably have met the objection by saying, We are not image-worshippers; the young ox is simply a visible symbol of our national God. But what happened? Modesty forbids almost that we should even mention such things; and yet, for truth's sake, we must allude to this phase of our subject, otherwise we shall fail to appreciate the prophet's vehemence in denouncing the sins of his time. Incredible as it may seem to us, public women were attached to the sanctuaries, as in parts of India today. Garments pledged by the poor which, according to Hebrew law, should have

been restored to the owner at sunset, were kept by the heartless creditors and carried into the temple precincts, where they were used as carpets by the drunken and immoral worshippers. This immorality, as among the Canaanites, had become part and parcel of the worship. How could it have been otherwise? The figure of an ox could not be adored by a cattle-breeding people without suggesting in their minds thoughts dangerously akin to the foul tempers of their heathen neighbours. That religion, as practiced at Bethel and at Dan, had become shockingly immoral can more readily be imagined than described. Jehovah's people in the North were given over to wine and women, to the love of money and luxurious living. They sought to atone for these things by an abundance of sacrifices, of burnt offerings, meal offerings, thank offerings, and freewill offerings, and by the payment of tithes over and above the legal requirement.

Externally there was much show of religion without the substance thereof. In short, it was a time of religious deterioration, resulting in social injustice and in the breakdown of social morality. Religion, once again, as in the days of Eli, was in need of a reformer. Ere the lamp of true religion went out in the temple at Bethel, God raised up Amos for the spiritual renovation of the house of Israel. Unlike Samuel and Isaiah, the prophetic call came to Amos, not in the sanctuary, but out in the open pastures in the vicinity of Tekoa. Like the immortal shepherd in the land of Midian, he was summoned to his prophetic career while he was doing his ordinary work. "Jehovah took me from behind the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel" (7:15). How the shepherd was transformed into a prophet, and how the call came to him, we do not know. No mention is made of a miraculous appearance of the God of Israel. The word of Jehovah breaks upon him without any intermediary. Was

the voice of God in this case inaudible to human ears, and audible only to his own conscience? I rather think so. While the argument from silence is never conclusive, I am nevertheless convinced that a miraculous appearance, if such had been granted to the shepherd of Tekoa, would hardly have been omitted from the sacred record, owing to its importance in the prophet's life. But, let me ask, Does the prophetic call become less real to a man, when it takes the form of the " still small voice," whispering to his heart and conscience that God has a special work for him to do? Indeed, not. In any event, Amos did not entertain the slightest doubt as to the reality of his call. The Lord had said, " Go," and he went, because he became conscious of a call which it was his duty to obey. " He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? Jehovah hath spoken, who can but prophesy? " (3:7-8). God communicates His purpose, punitive and otherwise, to His prophets in order that they may warn the people of the coming disaster and turn them to repentance. Woe to the man who would refuse to make known the revelation of God's punitive purpose concerning Israel! The message withheld by him would be like a burning fire in his bones. He cannot help himself; he must prophesy and declare that purpose to an idolatrous people.

The prophet Amos felt an irresistible personal conviction that he ought to deliver the message entrusted to him, whether man will hear or forbear. Accordingly, he left all and journeyed to Bethel, the ecclesiastical capital of the northern kingdom, there to denounce the sins of Israel. The burden of his message is the pronouncement of inevitable doom upon a faithless nation bewitched by Canaanitish image worship and forgetful of the most elementary moral duties. Arrived at the national sanctuary of Bethel, where all Israel had gathered to celebrate a

great festival, Amos suddenly interrupts, with his forebodings of woe (ch. 5), the joyous calf-worshippers. "Hear this word of lamentation which I lift up against you, O house of Israel. Fallen—to rise nevermore—is the virgin of Israel; flung down on her own ground, with none to raise her up. The city that marched forth a thousand, shall come back with a hundred; and the city that marched forth a hundred, shall come back with but ten." The prophet sees the nation here, as elsewhere, compared to a virgin, hurled to the ground and crushed by the overwhelming avalanche of Assyrian invasion at the call of an outraged Deity. The nation is as good as dead spiritually and morally.

Yet Amos, like all true preachers, discerns the outlines of what might prove to be the silver lining around the judgment-cloud, the approach of which he has just announced: a change of heart on the part of the guilty nation might do much to ward off the certainty of divine retribution. Let the people turn to Jehovah and amend their lives. The God of Israel is a righteous God who is righteous in all His dealings with His people. He cannot, in contrast with the carnal deities of Canaan, who were totally indifferent to social morality and justice, tolerate social injustice. In His eyes religion and conduct are inseparable. If they will substitute morality for immorality, and justice for injustice, then He will be their God, and they shall be His people. "Seek not Bethel, for Bethel shall come to nought. Seek Jehovah and ye shall live; seek good and not evil, that ye may live, and Jehovah God of Hosts will be with you." But the contemplation of actual conditions is evidently too much even for the prophet himself, for he continues, "Ah, they that turn justice to gall! I know how many are your crimes, and how arrogant your sins; ye browbeat the righteous, take bribes, and deprive the poor of his legal rights! There-

fore the prudent man in such a time keeps silence, for it is an evil time." Religion and ethics belong together. Social wrongs cannot be atoned for by the offering of sacrificial bribes to a righteous God. "I hate, I loathe your feasts, and I will not smell the savour of your sacrifices. Though ye bring to me burnt offerings and your meal offerings of fatted calves, I will not look at them. Let cease from me the noise of thy songs; to the playing of thy viols I will not listen. But let justice roll on like water, and righteousness like an unfailing stream." It is a mistake to suppose that Amos meant to condemn all ritualistic observances as such. He was not blind to the fact that rites and ceremonies might, under proper conditions, be an actual aid to true religion.

To understand his attitude toward external rites, it must be borne in mind that Amos had to contend against a one-sided emphasis upon ritual to the exclusion of ethics at a time when men had begun to divorce religion from the affairs of common life. The outward forms of religion were magnified, and altogether too little importance was attached to the inner spirit of righteousness. The cruel social conditions, of which the prophet complained, were due to wrong conceptions of God's character. His main contention is that external rites are absolutely worthless if they are to be a substitute for righteous dealings one with another. True religion cannot dispense with the social virtues required by a just God who is the Father of all men. Sacramental mysteries have no efficacy in the face of wilful disobedience to the will of a supreme righteous ruler. Indeed, they are an insult to God Himself, whose character cannot be compromised in this way. Woe to those who are content with present conditions without endeavouring on their part to establish righteous relations as between man and man! "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion and that trust in the mountain of Samaria, the no-

table men," the rich and opulent, who are satisfied with the glittering tinsel of political prosperity at the very moment when God was about to arise in judgment upon a highly favoured but apostate nation. In spite of the temporal and spiritual blessings vouchsafed unto them from on high, they have departed, under the influence of Canaanitish ideas of worship, from the Giver of every good and perfect gift. The nation is ripe for judgment. And yet, in pity for His people, God repeatedly changes His punitive purposes concerning Israel in the hope that they may yet turn to Him and live.

In chapter seven we have one last vehement call to repentance. Amos tells the pilgrims at Bethel that God has revealed to him in a series of visions what soon must come to pass. He describes the approach of a plague of locusts, such as he had already seen in actual experience (4:9), devouring the vegetation of the land, but before they could complete their deadly work, Amos intercedes on behalf of his people, urging its inability to recover from the blighting effect of this awful scourge, and he prays, "O Lord Jehovah, forgive, I beseech Thee." His prayer is heard, God agreeing to suspend the full execution of His purpose. The vision of a terrible drought is next described. Again the prophet intercedes and obtains a mitigation of the threatened punishment. The third vision, which aroused the alarm and opposition of Amaziah, the chief priest of the golden calf at Bethel, depicts Jehovah with a plumbline in His hand, measuring a crooked wall before tearing it down. Intuitively the prophet discerns the deeper meaning of this symbolical act. The crooked wall is a striking illustration of the moral obliquity of the people and their consequent fitness for divine judgment. What the result will be is explained in language of startling vividness, "The sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with

the sword." It was at this point that Amos was interrupted by Amaziah, the high priest of the calf-worshippers, who sent word to Jeroboam, saying, "Amos hath conspired against thee," thus reminding us of the words of the notorious high priest of a later time, when he said in the presence of the supreme Prophet, "He speaketh against Cæsar." Amaziah, who was conscious of no spiritual power with which to oppose the fearless prophet, fortifies himself, for lack of something better, by his duty to the powers that be, and orders Amos to leave the royal chapel and return to his sheepfold at Tekoa. "Thou visionary, go! Get thee off to the land of Judah; and earn thy bread there, and there play the prophet. But at Bethel thou shalt not again prophesy, for this is the king's sanctuary and the royal temple."

Amos, of course, knew all that; for that very reason he had chosen Bethel, where his message would produce the most immediate and powerful effect. But he disclaims being a professional prophet of that vagrant, vulgar, disclamatory and mercenary type, the qualities of whose prophecies might depend upon the size of the fee received for such services. As a genuine prophet he was superior to all such considerations. He was no hireling; he was not a member of a time-serving institution. He did not wear the black camel's hair cloak and leathern girdle. Consequently he received no fees and no gifts. He had his own means of subsistence. Although he has no connection with any official priesthood or conventional prophetic order he has not adopted his vocation without any special fitness, or inward call. His prophetic office was imposed upon him by a divine mandate, by the categorical imperative of conscience and of duty, which he could not resist. He preaches because he must and not as the prophetic college or guild prescribes. He is not a member of those traditional guilds, which rarely produced a real

prophet, the only exception being Elisha. Nevertheless, he is a prophet in reality, as the third chapter of his prophecy implies. His answer to the wicked insinuations of Amaziah, who seems to have been less anxious for the security of Jeroboam's throne than for his ecclesiastical position, is full of dignity born of the consciousness of his divine commission. He rises up like a giant and says to the hireling priest, "No prophet I, nor son of prophet I, but a shepherd, and a dresser of wild figs; and Jehovah took me from behind the flock and said, Go and prophesy to My people." Amos now informs Amaziah that he would live to see the fulfilment of his predictions concerning Israel. On a former occasion, the prophet, no longer expecting Israel to repent, had exclaimed, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" The truth of his prediction was fully established thirty years later (*722* B. C.), when the nation was carried into captivity by the Assyrians.

What can we learn from the fearless and intrepid shepherd prophet of Tekoa? For one thing, he teaches us to make a vigorous protest against the tendency of our time to divorce religion from the affairs of common life.

Politically, the practice of our statesmen and legislators is to regard the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ as applicable to the individual but not to the national group of which the individual is a part. If the gospel is good for the individual, it ought to be good for a group of individuals as well. But why argue an axiomatic truth? The truth of the matter is that our political leaders are not ready as yet, any more than the nobles of Samaria, to abandon the worship of the golden calf and all that that implies. In early times the idea of strength, of might, and of power was frequently emphasized as one of the most prominent attributes of Deity. It so happened that under the influence of Canaanitish nature-worship, the political

leaders of the northern kingdom selected, as an emblem of Jehovah, the young ox, because, by its physical strength and prowess, it best symbolized the idea of power and might, which they associated with the God of Israel. Jeroboam and his house have found numerous successors who still adhere most religiously to the barbarous principle that "might makes right." It would be futile to expect in national and international politics the application of the Golden Rule as long as men persist in trying to approach God through the emblem of an ox. Oh, for men like Amos to teach us the first principles of true religion and to arouse us from our self-complacent trust in the arm of flesh! May they have the moral courage to stand up in the high places of the land and admonish our leaders, and us, to seek first the kingdom of God, and then, by an honest application of the principles of the gospel, our political problems will be solved. May they, as sentinels to the camp of God, warn us of the insidious presence in our national life of the Amaziahs who, in serving the selfish interests of Jeroboam or Cæsar, forget to serve the living God. Young men, here is a task that will challenge and test your courage and heroism.

The same principle of might ruling over right prevails to a large extent in modern society. This, by the way, explains why we have not been able to eliminate it from our national life. We have already spoken of the oppression of the poor, of the heartless foreclosures of a landed aristocracy, of the extortionate methods of money-mad business men, and of the perversion of justice in the law courts of the eighth century before our era. It is significant to note that all these forms of oppression were practised by the leaders of Israelitish society under the semblance of Canaanitish law in contrast with Hebrew law, which breathed an entirely different spirit. The principles of the former were based on the value of *things;* the lat-

ter, on the value of *man* as a member of the Hebrew commonwealth. Men, with an eye to their own advantage, naturally adopted, at the expense of the poor, the principles of Canaanitish law as the best means of acquiring the power that comes from money and things in general. Is it any wonder that Amos blazed up in indignation at the sight of avaricious men resorting to every form of oppression in order to get the things they coveted? With Amos as our guide we come to the social conditions of our own time. A glance at his prophecies soon discloses the fact that we, too, are tempted to maintain our religion at the expense of social justice. Anyone who is familiar with the economic history of the Middle Ages and of our own time, will have to admit that the vast estates of our landed aristocracy have been accumulated by a strict adherence to Canaanitish business practices founded upon the principle of might. A selfish business world, firmly believing in the survival of the fittest, and trying to live unto itself alone, ought to learn the alphabet of a sensitive social consciousness. As in the days of the prophet, there are those who grind the faces of the poor, and build houses of hewn stone on the avenues and boulevards of our cities. Who knows but that many a princely mansion is nothing more than a monument of extortion? Within recent years captains of industry have driven competitors out of business and, after reducing competition to a minimum, have accumulated enormous fortunes by charging the poor consumer all that "the traffic will bear." The same grasping and selfish spirit has infected even the ranks of those who are proud of their Christian name, but who, in the conduct of their business, will permit themselves to be as unjust and as unfair as the law or the customs of the "Canaanitish" market will allow.

And as regards the administration of justice, the theory is that all men are equal before the law. But what are the

facts? It will be no exaggeration to say that some of our best legal advisers are found reclining on the ivory couches of the magnates of "Samaria," feasting themselves at the banquets of mammon, and not where they ought to be found—down in the slums and poor tenement districts defending the rights of impoverished widows and orphans. Of course, there are laudable exceptions, of men and women whose consciences will not allow them to bow down before King Mammon whose throne has been established upon the principle of might. Nevertheless, we are justified in saying that in the world of industry and commerce, sordid materialism is still on the ascendant in spite of the warnings of One who, though He might have been rich, became poor for our sake. Jesus, the supreme Prophet, says to our commercial world, "Beware of covetousness. . . . Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. . . . No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Lord, send us men with the moral courage of an Amos to denounce our un-Christian methods of making and spending money, and to proclaim with new emphasis the gospel of mutual goodwill!

Morally, conditions are far from ideal. The social sins and vices which ruined Israel and ancient Rome have not become extinct in our modern civilization. God has blessed us as no other nation. But who will deny that great temporal blessings and great prosperity are frequently associated with great corruption? Among both rich and poor alike social sins are rampant. At the root of it all is the worship, in one form or another, of the god of sensual pleasure once associated at Bethel with a holy

God, to whom every form of immorality and social impurity is an abomination. We must not forget that our God is a moral God, and that true religion must be the animating and inspiring motive of a pure morality. But alas! How far removed we are from the moral code of the Master Himself, who taught us to regard the sinful desire, the evil thought, as equivalent to the sinful act itself. Good Lord, deliver us from the promptings and temptations of an evil heart! Purify the thoughts of our minds and hearts by Thy holy presence. Let us never, in the eyes of the world, compromise, either in thought or deed, God's holiness by an immoral act. Religion and social purity really belong together.

As to religion itself, no one will be bold enough to maintain that the religious conditions at Bethel do not suggest any modern parallels. It will scarcely be denied that the Church is suffering from a very fatal separation of religion from the common duties of daily life, not because it was meant to be so by the Founder of Christianity, but because so many of our church members still persist in dividing their life into two or more different compartments. For instance, there is the religious compartment reserved for religion on the Sabbath day, and there is the secular compartment, comprising the economic, the social, and the political activities of the six so-called secular days of the week. Now, you must not mix up the things belonging in the religious compartment with those belonging in the secular compartment. Why, it would never do to put a little religion into their secular affairs, for that is a different sphere. That would be shocking and very disconcerting to their self-complacent lives. Such a conception of religion often leads, as at Bethel, to an outward display of religion which, on the surface at least, may have all the appearance of true piety. It finds expression in church attendance, in the singing of hymns, in the mechan-

ical repetition of the Lord's Prayer and of the Creed, in contributions for the current expenses of the congregation, and occasionally, in a donation toward the benevolent enterprises of the church.

They are not irreligious; they are not atheists. Intellectually they assent to God's existence, but their God seems to be satisfied with the mechanical and perfunctory performance of external rites and observances. They seem to think that God limits Himself to the weekly Sabbath and its observances, and consequently takes no interest in what they do the rest of the week. They even partake of the blood of the Sacrament without any thought of applying in their lives the social consequences which the Sacrament of the Altar plainly teaches. How can they have communion with the Christ who, as the Servant of servants, went about doing good, and who gave His precious life as a ransom for many? Is there really nothing at all for a Christian to do? One might think so to judge from the barren and fruitless lives of so many nominal Christians of the present time. Their religion lacks the moral tone. To them, the moral obligations of religion have no practical meaning. Like the priest and the Levite, "they pass by on the other side." It is sufficient that they worship in the temple. What a travesty of religion! Could it be possible that they are ignorant of the moral requirements of the Gospel? Why, no; it is the religion of the golden calf in which they are chiefly interested, because it divests religion of its moral contents. Its modern devotees are trying to persuade themselves that they can worship God, with both eyes fixed upon the golden calf which caters to their selfish interests.

The golden calf is one of the many wayside shrines of modern life, claiming its devotees by the thousands, yea, by the myriads. Who, in the face of such conditions, can sit at ease in Zion, while the mighty voice of God is speak-

ing through the thunder-tones of Amos, and saying, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion! Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" God in times past has spoken to men through patriarchs, prophets and apostles. He still speaks to us by prophetic preachers, who know how to sound a timely warning to a sleeping camp which is unaware of the foe's presence. May all young men of the Amos-type have ears to listen to the call of God, thundering sometimes in great majesty, or speaking in quiet, low accents to men's consciences in order to arouse them to a sense of their duty in the midst of so pressing and great dangers. When God calls we must be ready to leave our occupations, however remunerative and attractive, and make all necessary preparations for the delivery of the message which He has entrusted to us. True, the call of God often involves the preaching of unpleasant truths. But can God's spokesman do otherwise than declare the whole counsel of God? Of course, if he has no conscience, he will limit his message to the prophesying of smooth things. This is what one might expect from a calf worshipper, like Amaziah, but not from a man with the religious and moral convictions of an Amos. To deliver the prophet's message, or to preach the gospel in its purity, is no easy task. But the man who is possessed of God loses all fear for his personal safety. His only fear is the fear of arousing God's anger by withholding from His people part of the message of Jehovah. "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" Under the compulsion of such a call a man feels like Paul, when he said, "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me, if I preach not the gospel." Woe to any young man who, when divinely called, turns his back upon such a vocation! It were better for him if he had never been born.

## V

## THE CALL OF HOSEA

### Hosea 1-3

THE great task of Amos, as we have seen, was to sound a timely note of warning to a nation in political, social, and spiritual decay. The secret of God's purpose concerning Israel is revealed, not to excite wonder, but to inspire the prophet with the message which he is to deliver. Jehovah is compared to a roaring lion ready to spring upon apostate Israel. Hence the lion-like courage of the man in making known to Israel God's punitive purpose, for he is under divine orders. His message may be summed up in the warning cry, " Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel! " But the sternness of the message is tempered by the hope of repentance. Let Israel, therefore, improve her opportunity, and repent ere the day of grace be ended! The prophet's admonition, however, is all in vain. This is proved by the mission of his younger contemporary Hosea, who was a native not of the southern but of the northern kingdom. He, too, compares God to a lion, and yet there is a difference between the stern shepherd of Tekoa, emphasizing the moral aspects of religion and the almost evangelical tone of this prophet of grace who interprets religion in terms of love. Hosea is the St. John of the literary prophets. While Amos may be said to speak of God's justice, Hosea speaks of His yearning love. By drawing this comparison we do not mean to imply that Hosea's sense of the inevitableness of ethical discipline is less keen than that of Amos. But we do

affirm that Hosea penetrates into the very depths of the divine nature when he proclaims love to be the ultimate element in religion.

The power of redeeming love moves man to a more genuine repentance than the consciousness of outraged justice. To spurn God's love is infinitely worse than the violation of the sovereignty of law. The key-doctrine of Hosea's book is this: God is holy love. The primary idea in his mind is the love-relation of Jehovah to Israel as expressed by the figure of marriage. This marriage relation between Jehovah the husband and Israel the bride, is a picture of the covenant between God and His people. The rest of Hosea's thoughts follow from it as corollaries. The evils which he describes are all of one piece; they are all rooted in Israel's cardinal sin, and that sin is apostasy from Jehovah. Man-made kings and foreign alliances, idolatry and immorality are all instances of Israel's unfaithfulness and disloyalty to God.

Where no distinction is drawn between the sacred and the secular, Israel's political apostasy, interpreted in terms of religion, amounts to a violation of the marriage covenant entered into between the nation and its theocratic head. Hosea denounces foreign alliances because of a similar association, among the heathen, of religion and politics. To seek alliance with Assyria or Egypt implied the recognition, for all practical purposes at least, of the existence of foreign gods, and of their ability to further the political ends for which the alliance was made. The blending of politics with religion tended to a reciprocity of religious practices, and in the case of Israel, to numerous idolatrous accretions to the religion of God's people. Such a national policy was an act of disloyalty to Jehovah. It indicated alienation from Israel's divine husband, who was entitled to the whole-hearted affection of His bride. Tacitly it implied distrust of Jehovah's ability to protect

His bride in the event of threatening encroachments from without. And besides, it jeopardized Israel's unique mission in the world. An earlier trace of the nation's misconception of its true mission may be seen in Israel's demand for a king of the type possessed by the surrounding nations, and in Samuel's unwilling acquiescence to that demand because of the ever-present danger of trusting in militarism and in the allurements of heathen civilization rather than in Israel's God. The distinctively religious mission of the nation must not be obscured by selfish political aspirations. The attitude of Hosea and other prophets is a striking anticipation of the significant words of Jesus, addressed to the representative of a great world power, "My kingdom is not of this world."

Hosea's antipathy to the reigning dynasty of Israel is accounted for by the fact that the kings of the house of Jeroboam had sought alliance with idolatrous nations, and this encouraged idolatry (I Kings 12:28; II Kings 15:19). Israel's defection from the house of David was nothing short of defection from Jehovah also, because of its disastrous effects upon the religion of the northern kingdom. Hosea, as we know, prophesied toward the close of the reign of Jeroboam the Second, and during the political turmoils succeeding the death of this powerful monarch. The successors of Jeroboam the Second had for the most part ascended the throne through violence and murder, resulting in political chaos. Thus, for example, four of the seven kings of Israel enjoying the brief tenancy of a blood-stained throne were assassinated between 740 and 732 B. C. These man-made kings, who were sooner or later man-murdered, are the twin targets of the prophet's scorn, because they and their predecessors had sought by the introduction of the worship of foreign idols, to rival Jehovah Himself. No wonder that the prophet arrayed himself against these artificial kings and

their artificial gods, who were both the work of men's hands. "They have made kings but not by Me. With their silver and their gold they manufactured for themselves idols, only that they might be cut off," and carried into exile (8:4).

The confused condition of Israelitish society is equally hopeless. The whole nation is morally corrupt. On every side social degeneracy, vice, and immorality prevail. "Jehovah hath a quarrel with the inhabitants of the land, for there is no fidelity, or lovingkindness, or (practical) knowledge of God in the land. There is nought but perjury, and breaking of faith, and killing, and stealing, and adultery. . . . They are all adulterers" (4:1, 2; 7:4). The material prosperity of the time of Amos persisted with its attendant evils. Luxurious living, however, coupled with gross licentiousness and sensuality seems to have gained in momentum. The inevitable results of continued unchastity, practiced periodically under the alleged sanctions of an immoral religion, were becoming more and more apparent. The nemesis of fornication was that it impaired the people's intellect; it resulted in abortion, sterility, and a decreasing population, and destroyed the very foundations of the social unit, the family. The prophet exclaims, "Harlotry takes away the brains. . . . No more birth, no more motherhood, no more conception! Fruit they produce not; yea, even when they beget children I slay the darlings of their womb. Give them, O Lord, a miscarrying womb and breasts that are dry!" (4:11; 9:11, 16).

Hosea, it will be noted, traces the prevalent immorality to the enfeebling worship of the many powers of physical life under the name of Baal or nature-worship. The local Baalim were looked upon by the Semites in general as the dispensers of natural fertility. The increase of field and flock as well as of the human race itself was ascribed to

the creative activity of these imaginary gods who, according to the popular way of thinking, were wedded to the people in their respective territories. The relation of a god to his people was conceived of in a physical sense, which found expression in promiscuous prostitution, and hence the synonymous usage of the terms idolatry and harlotry. In Hosea's day the sensuous Baal or nature-worship and Jehovah-worship under the figure of a calf or young bull could scarcely be distinguished the one from the other. Accordingly the unspiritual calf-worship was condemned by the prophet because it lost sight of the true ethical character of Jehovah.

Under the influence of Canaanitish worship and by reason of the people's confidence in the propitiatory value of sacrificial offerings, conscience was dulled and that immorality permitted which they mingled so shamelessly with their religious zeal. To these immoral ritualists, Jehovah says, "I desire lovingkindness and not sacrifice; the (practical) knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (6:6). Such acts of disloyalty on the part of Jehovah's unfaithful spouse, tending to obscure the purely spiritual aspects of Israel's religion, cannot be atoned for by sacrificial victims, "With their sheep and their cattle they go about to seek Jehovah, but they shall not find Him" (5:6). Jehovah's wayward wife, by her idolatry and consequent immorality, has broken her troth with her divine husband; and although deserving of punishment, the love of Jehovah cannot altogether desert her. His holy wrath is tempered by the love "that will not let me go." Divine love is not cancelled by Israel's religious, social, moral, and political apostasy. After a severe denunciation of Israel's waywardness, Jehovah cries out, "How am I to give thee up, O Ephraim? How am I to let thee go, O Israel? How am I to give thee up? My heart is turned within Me, My compassions are kindled

together. I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee, yet I come not to consume!" (11:8, 9). The certainty of Israel's approaching doom did not obscure the divine love. If Israel will not turn to God in the days of sweet prosperity, then the bitterness of exilic discipline must wean her from her paramours. Love, somehow, will prevail in the end.

How strong a hold this whole idea of Israel's conjugal infidelity to Jehovah had taken of the prophet Hosea is best illustrated by the first three chapters of his book, describing the sad circumstances of his own married life. His wife, like so many wives in Israel, proved unfaithful as a result of the contaminating influence of the religious apostasy of the nation. The heads of families, the prophet tells us, need not be surprised at the corruption of their wives and daughters when they themselves participate in the foreign and impure rites on every hilltop. "A spirit of harlotry hath led them astray, and they have played the harlot from their God. Upon the headlands of the hills they sacrifice, and on the heights offer incense, under oak or poplar or terebinth, for the shade thereof is pleasant. Wherefore your daughters play the harlot and your daughters-in-law commit adultery. I will not punish your daughters when they play the harlot, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery; for they themselves go aside with the harlots, and sacrifice with the common women of the shrines! So the stupid people fall to ruin!" (4:13-14).

What folly for the fathers of Israel to practice impurity within the very shadows of Canaanitish altars and at the same time imagine that they can keep their womankind chaste! The corrupt state of morals, whether in the home, or in society at large, must be traced very largely to the licentious atmosphere of these breeding places of iniquity.

Hosea's domestic experience was the direct outcome of a perverted religion. That it resulted in untold heart agony to the prophet is easily intelligible. Still, it was not an unmixed evil. It helped to crystallize Hosea's message, reflecting like a mirror Jehovah's experience with Israel. With delicate reserve he tells the story and reveals the secret of his life. "The beginning of the word of Jehovah by Hosea. And Jehovah said to Hosea, Go, take thee a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land hath committed great harlotry in departing from Jehovah. So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. And Jehovah said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while and I shall visit the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will bring to an end the kingdom of the house of Israel; and it shall be on that day that I shall break the bow of Israel in the Vale of Jezreel. And she conceived again, and bore a daughter; and He said to him, Call her name Un-Loved; for I will not again have pity on the house of Israel, that I should fully forgive them. And she weaned Un-Loved and conceived and bore a son, And He said, Call his name Not-My-People; for ye are not My people, and I—I am not your God" (1:2-6, 8-9).

Under the impulse of a warm attachment Hosea married one of the many young women who had shared in the wild orgies of Baal and Ashtoreth at the hillside shrines. Where was the young man to find a marriageable virgin when all the land was full of idolatry and its evil concomitants? Gomer, already contaminated by the religious taint of the time, is not called a harlot outright, but a wife of harlotry. The evil inclination, the hideous tendency to indiscriminate sensuality was latent in her heart. The young woman bore him three children, to whom he gave names indicative of the impending fate of idolatrous Israel. Jezreel, the name of the first child, was a reminder

of the time-serving policy of the house of Jehu in its failure to stem the tide of religious syncretism with its religious and moral chaos. Un-Loved betokened that Israel's day of grace was fast drawing to a close, and that Jehovah's love would ere long assume the form of exilic discipline in order to bring His wayward bride to her full senses. Not-My-People signified that Israel had forfeited its unique position as the people of Israel.

In the second chapter, after a call to repentance, we are told that Ephraim forsook Jehovah for Baal because, like the Canaanites themselves, wayward Israel had ascribed the products of the soil, such as corn, wine, oil, wool, and flax to the creative activity of the local gods. The faithless spouse, with her heart divided between God and Baal, left her first love for deities falsely supposed to be the authors of her material prosperity. "She did not know that it was I who gave her the corn and the new wine and the oil; yea, silver I heaped upon her and gold, wherewith they made Baal images" (2:8). The time will come when superstitious Israel will learn by bitter experience that all things come from Jehovah and belong to Him. He will take away from His wandering bride material blessings attributed to imaginary deities and remove her from the land. The Baalim, formerly adored and loved by her, will be unable to prevent it. But the discipline will be also a means of reformation. Israel will be led back to her first love and thus become the recipient of fresh marks of confidence and love at the hands of her divine husband. Jehovah's marriage to Israel, it will be superfluous to add, was thought of not in a physical sense; it was a moral relation.

The religious apostasy of the nation, as mentioned above, had a disastrous effect on the domestic morals of the people. From chapter 3 we learn that faithless Gomer, with the spirit of harlotry in her heart, abandons Hosea

for a paramour, drifting finally, like all of her class, into slavery. With that brutal cruelty which ever lies close beside selfish passion, her paramour had evidently dragged the wretched woman into the open market-place, and sold her for the price of an abject slave. But so deep and genuine is Hosea's affection for Gomer that he redeems her from bondage and brings her home again. There he keeps her in stern seclusion, taking earnest measures to wean her to a better mind, and watching with unabated love over the guilty wife of his youth until her affection for him should revive. A voice within him said, "Go, love her still, and by firm and tender handling win her back to the purity of a chastened, disillusioned, married life." A touching picture, is it not, of the divine love for faithless Israel, which refuses to be defeated, but will seek to recover the people, though it be through the loving sternness of exilic discipline? Thus Hosea learned to interpret God's ways with sinful men in the light of the fall, the punishment, and the amendment of a once beautiful but faithless wife. Henceforth he comes forward as a prophet, speaking with the energy and pathos of one who has actually experienced in the narrower circle of the home what God for generations past had experienced in the wider circle of the house of Israel. Gomer had proved unfaithful to Hosea; so, too, had Israel to her divine husband. But Gomer in a sense was a victom of idolatrous practices, appealing to the baser passions; and so, too, was Israel. In either case, however, love, though baffled for a time, surmounts all obstacles in reclaiming to virtue the prodigal wife. The love of Hosea reminds us of the love of that greater Galilæan who, in the parable of the prodigal son, as well as in that of the good Samaritan, has given us a most wonderful interpretation of God's love; and last, but not least, made visible to our faltering gaze the inexhaustible depths of divine love in love incarnate.

It would be highly interesting to know something of the man Hosea and of the exact course of events leading to his prophetic call. As regards the former, all that we know is that his home was in the northern kingdom, and that he was the son of Beeri. Jewish commentators are of the opinion that Hosea was the son of a prophet. But this is uncertain. According to several modern interpreters, it is not improbable that he was a member of the priesthood. This, too, lacks verification. And as to the method of his preparation for the prophetic office, we can only point to the experiences of his wedded life. But again we look in vain for a detailed account of the incidents and events leading up to his call. The only incident in his life which doubtless had something to do with the content of his message, must be inferred from the internal evidence of the book itself and from the religious and moral conditions of the time in which the prophet lived. The experiences of his wedded life schooled him for his hard task. Hosea felt that the Lord designed them to be the providential means of enabling him to understand a great religious truth, which it was his duty to proclaim with all the force and pathos of a terribly mortifying experience.

It is needless to enter into the endless controversies as to whether Hosea's relation to Gomer was a literary fiction, or an ecstatic vision, or a reality, or an act of obedience to an immoral command. On general principles the literal interpretation of Scripture is to be preferred to the allegorical method, except where it can be shown that we are dealing not with actual facts but with allegory. In our humble judgment there is no need for allegory in endeavouring to explain Hosea's relation to Gomer. Moreover, allegory in this case would not obviate the moral difficulty which such an explanation involves. In the ethical consciousness of God's people there is no essential difference between a fictitious immoral act and an immoral deed en-

acted in real life. However, all the facts in the case can easily be accounted for by adhering to the literal interpretation of the first three chapters. Hosea, we repeat, married, as the prophet himself says, a wife of harlotry, that is to say, a woman with adulterous inclinations and with the spirit of harlotry in her heart. She is not called a harlot outright. This leads us to think that the young bride was not outwardly immoral when the prophet married her. Inwardly, however, like the average woman of her day, she was a woman with immoral proclivities engendered by the sensual rites of the heathen shrines which were to be found on every hilltop. Hosea's love did not avail permanently to restrain them. But he forebore with her, hoping for amendment. With what result has already been explained. In spite of Gomer's fickleness the old love would not die in the prophet's heart. Finally there flashed upon his mind the thought that if he could continue to love a wandering wife, how much greater would be the love of God for His wayward people!

Whether or not the prophetic call of Hosea preceded his tragic domestic experience is not stated. He may have had a faint idea of God's love before. But we are safe in saying that it could not have gripped his soul to the same extent, if he had not lived through such an experience. The heart agony of it all finds expression in the wild cry of anguish which can hardly be mastered. His literary style is marked by the sobs and sighs of a distracted mourner, quivering with emotion. The attempt to reduce the prophet's married life to pure allegory, with no element of history in it, leaves out of account the severe realism of the prophet's words. There is this much realism about it, to say the very least, that Gomer's children were living witnesses to Hosea's message. His marriage to Gomer was a reality and not a literary fiction. It is inconceivable that the prophet should have invented such a tale about his

wife. The simple facts are told. There is nothing incredible about Hosea's domestic experience. Attention has already been called to the effect of spiritual adultery upon the home life. What had happened to him had happened to many of his contemporaries.

In some respects the call of Hosea is analogous to the call of Amos; to each of them there comes the word of Jehovah summoning them to the prophetic office. In the call of the son of Beeri, as in that of the shepherd of Tekoa, we look in vain for any explicit reference to a miraculous appearance of Jehovah. If the prophetic impulse in the case of Hosea antedates his great domestic trial, then most certainly the awful experience of an unhappy married life helped to clarify and give added force to his message. But as there is no mention of a miraculous voice in the call of Hosea, the prophet may have been first awakened to the conviction of having a prophetic mission by what transpired in his own home. The prophetic call is not confined to the interposition of miraculous voices. It may burst upon a man's religious consciousness with all the urgency of a divine call, on the basis of what is commonly regarded as a secular experience. A man may have had religious convictions before; Hosea probably had his, but the climax is reached when Hosea makes the shocking discovery that the wife of his youth had been false to him. The conviction forced itself on his mind that his domestic experience was no mere accident, for it taught him to understand, as never before, Israel's relation to God. To us it appears most probable that this was "the beginning of Jehovah's word" to him, and through him to Israel.

What message does Hosea bring to us? The prophet tells us that the sin of Israel was the sin of Baalism. Increase in material wealth meant an increase in altars to Baal. God's gifts were turned into human idols and wor-

shipped by men who were more zealous in bowing the knee to Baal than to God Himself. In modern idolatry God's blessings are abused and converted into the images of Baalism. Lust, covetousness, and pleasure allure men's hearts and they set up gold, worldly distinction, and popular applause and cry, "These be thy gods." Men are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." Then, too, covetousness is a form of idolatry. Of some it may be said, "Their god is their belly." Many are engaged in the pursuit of pleasure and of material gain. Most of their time is spent in greedy indulgence and in inordinate attachments of every kind. Earthly possessions take the place of God. Success in worldly affairs is attributed to progressive business methods and industrial habits rather than to the Creator of the very things which are of basic importance in every business enterprise. Men are blind to God's presence in their daily affairs, owing to a multitude of trees which ever and anon hide from their eyes the Lord of the garden. They can see the foliage of the tree nearest to them for the shade thereof is pleasant, and they make it their Baal. They cannot see or hear the real Owner of the garden, standing in the midst of the garden and calling out to every son of Adam, "Where art thou?"

Strange, very strange, is it not, that material wealth should rob so many of our people of their spiritual vision? While money, or material wealth in general, is not inherently bad, the sad fact remains that the increase in wealth often results in a corresponding increase in the distance between the recipient of such wealth and God who gives it; indeed, not infrequently it means an increase in altars to Baal. In other words, instead of living consecrated Christian lives and possibly preaching the gospel to a desperately wicked world, many young men are recklessly at ease in the contemplation of present blessings, and totally

oblivious to the needs of their fellowmen. It is for this very reason that so few rich men's sons find their way into the ministry. In general, the rich young ruler the world over prefers his possessions to Jesus Christ. There is no sense of stewardship. For men to say that they can do with their time and their talents and their possessions as they please is to perpetuate the spirit of Baalism. God has given us all these things that they might be a blessing not only to ourselves but also to others. If, in the face of the crying evils of our own time, "the word of the Lord" has come to you in a somewhat similar way as it did to Amos and Hosea, how dare you run after the Baal of your own selfish desires and passions? Is it the gold on the golden calf that makes you such a zealous devotee of Baal? Ah, my friend, what you need is not more altars and more sacrifices to Baal. You need another kind of sacrifice than that offered to your self-invented deities. You need a vision of the sacrifice of infinite love on Calvary's hill. You need a vision of the deeper meaning of the cross. In the contemplation of that sacrifice, learn, with God's help, to sacrifice your own selfish will, your own pride, and your own lust: *that* kind of sacrifice will liberate you from your besetting sin, which is eating with alarming rapidity into the vitals of your life.

The iniquities and idolatries of his time weighed heavily on Hosea's heart. Young man, are the social evils and vices of present-day society no concern of yours? The only remedy for the putrefying sores of our social organism is the gospel of God's redeeming love in Christ Jesus. Will you not proclaim that truth to the wayward, idolatrous hearts of men? Will you not preach that gospel to a desperately wicked world? We who belong to a faithless generation need to preach this truth constantly to ourselves as well as to others. The sins of the flesh are deep-seated enough to cause us grave concern. The sin of con-

cupiscence is like a thorn in the flesh. Oh for the moral purity of Jesus Christ! Oh that the power of the gospel would exorcise and cast out of our hearts and lives the devil of evil desire! How dare we, with our riotous thoughts and our inflamed imagination cast the first stone at faithless Gomer? O God, fix our unstable thoughts on Thee, so that the germ of our evil volitions may fail of fruition! Make and keep us morally pure and clean. Transform our hearts by the dynamic of a holy love, and may they go out to Thee in undivided love and adoration. May life's sorrows and disappointments, its trials and crushing defeats, tugging at the very heartstrings of our being, drive us to Thee, and lead our bleeding hearts to the discovery of the higher meaning of life, so that we may impart the same with the power of an irresistible conviction to the erring souls of men. To this end may we dedicate all that we have and are, our temporal and spiritual blessings, and consecrate our lives upon the altar of loving sacrifice to God and to our fellowmen.

## VI

## THE CALL OF ISAIAH

### Isaiah 6

ISAIAH, the prince of the literary prophets, lived in the metropolis of the southern kingdom. According to rabbinical tradition he was "of the house and lineage of David." He had at all times ready access to the king and the court, and could appear before them without having been previously announced. True, this may partly be ascribed to the high prerogatives accorded to the prophetic office. And yet, we are constrained to note Isaiah's extraordinary literary ability. From the contents of his prophecies we infer that he was well educated. Although a man of high social standing, his chief ambition in life was not to become a great statesman, but a prophetic witness to the quiet strength and staying-power that comes from faith in the living God. Among the prophets of the Old Testament he is pre-eminently the prophet of faith. In Amos, as we have seen, Israel's sin is that it has lost sight of the ethical demands of religion; in Hosea, the cardinal sin of Israel is disloyalty to a loving God in the sphere of religion, politics, and social morality; but in Isaiah the root of all evil is unbelief or pride.

The long reign of Uzziah was in many respects no less brilliant than that of Jeroboam II, his contemporary in the north. Uzziah fortified Jerusalem and other cities, and strengthened the borders of the southern kingdom. He organized a powerful standing army, stocked his arsenals with munitions of war, including newly invented projectile

engines, and, by a series of successful military campaigns, rendered tributary several of the neighbouring nations. For nearly half a century Judah had enjoyed almost unprecedented prosperity. But political prosperity did not lead to introspection and thankfulness in the southern any more than it did in the northern kingdom. On the contrary, it resulted in pride and arrogance, in luxurious living and the decline of true religion. While Uzziah was a king of the better sort, he was not altogether immune to the presumptuous and irreverent temper of the age. The chronicler (II Chron. 16:15 ff.) relates that "his name spread far abroad, for he was marvelously helped till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense."

The wilful, but now leprous king, was thrust from the temple. Of the people themselves Isaiah says, "They are replenished from the east, and are diviners of the clouds like the Philistines, and make contracts with foreigners. Their land also is full of silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is full of horses also and there is no end to their chariots; nay, their land is full of idols; the work of their hands, that which their own fingers have made, they worship. Therefore shall man be humbled and mankind abased; nor show them favour! Go into the rock, and hide thyself in the ground, from the dreadful presence of Jehovah, and from the splendour of His majesty. The lofty eyes of man shall be abased, and the haughtiness of men humbled; and Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day" (2:6-11). The increase of wealth and military strength produced a proud sense of security which resulted in materialistic unbelief. Rather than trust in the Lord of Hosts the men of Judah, conscious of their political successes, put their sole reliance in a well-

equipped army or in the military support of foreign allies. The prophet is opposed to entangling alliances with heathen nations because they opened the door to influences unfavourable to a pure religion. Foreign alliances and commercial contracts with other nations led to the introduction of divination and idolatry. To seek aid from outside betrayed a woeful lack of faith in Jehovah. This, in the eyes of the prophet, is the unpardonable sin, for it is a sin unto death. Such open infidelity must be punished.

Thus we are in a position to understand the anti-military policy of Isaiah. God, in His divine majesty, is supreme over all. In spite of everything to the contrary, the prophet's faith remains unshaken, "I will wait for Jehovah, who hideth His face from the house of Jacob; yea, I will wait for Him" (8:17). There can be no substitute for the Almighty. When Isaiah began his ministry, Judah was entering upon the stormiest period of its history. Several years after the death of Uzziah, Judah was threatened with invasion (chap. 7). The object of the Syro-Ephraimitic war (734 B. C.) was to depose Ahaz, who had refused to enter the coalition formed by Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Samaria against Assyria. At the approach of the confederate kings "the heart of Ahaz shook, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest shake before the wind." Not so Isaiah; nothing can shake his faith in the God of Israel. The prophet, fearing an alliance with Assyria, admonishes Ahaz, saying, "Take heed and be quiet, fear not, neither let thy heart be timid on account of these two stumps of smoking firebrands." Isaiah assures the king that the rulers of Syria and Israel —puny mortals both of them—will not prevail against Jehovah, the ultimate King of Judah. And then he adds, "If ye have no faith, verily ye shall not be established." The alliterative force of the words used in the Hebrew text is variously rendered, "If ye do not confide, verily

ye shall not abide—If ye will not have faith, ye shall not have staith—If ye hold not fast, verily ye shall not stand fast—Verily, if thou have no strong trust, no trusty stronghold shall be thine—No faith, no fixity." Faith in the present crisis is the essential thing. The security and continuance of the assailed throne and kingdom depends entirely upon faith in God. Ahaz must choose between faith and unbelief, between Jehovah and Tiglath-Pileser. Have faith, Ahaz, and "God will be with us" (Immanuel). What Ahaz and his people need is not an alliance with Tiglath-Pileser III, but the reliance of an unshakable faith in the Almighty. Then Judah will be saved from disaster and ruin, not otherwise.

So, again, in the time of Hezekiah, when the faithless politicians of Jerusalem were advocating an alliance with Egypt against Assyria, Isaiah urges the people to pursue a policy of peace and trust in the God of Zion (28: 12), and to abandon their disquieting, distracting search for earthly aids. "Thus saith Jehovah, Behold I have laid in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone of solid foundation: he that hath faith shall not be put to shame" (28: 16). What is meant by the precious corner-stone of solid foundation? Surely the believer is not asked to put his trust in the solid rock of the altar of burnt sacrifice on Mount Zion, or in any of the foundation-stones of the Solomonic temple. The prophet cannot mean to connect the peace and security of the believer with the rocky eminence on which Zion was founded. In an earlier chapter (8: 14) he speaks of Jehovah as a "stone of stumbling and as a rock of offense" to unbelieving Israel in the north and to faithless Judah in the south. Elsewhere Jehovah is referred to as "the Rock of Israel" (30: 29). The same title for the God of Israel occurs in Deuteronomy 32: 3, 4; and in II Samuel 23: 3. Jehovah, then, must be the object of faith in the passage under con-

sideration. To the man of faith, He is a sure support, a mighty fortress, affording tranquil security in the hour of danger. Let the politicians of Jerusalem boast of their secret alliance with Egypt against Assyria. With all their self-confidence and political intriguing they will soon come to grief. Anything short of religious faith, of absolute confidence in the solidity of the foundation already laid in Zion will not avail.

The political structure which they have reared on the quicksands of a faithless diplomacy will come to sudden ruin at the approach of the Assyrian cyclone. When that day comes the foundation-stone in Zion will remain indestructible. There is only one ground of confidence, only one foundation, upon which to build, and that is the Rock of Israel, the one eternal God, whose quiet presence, like a precious corner-stone of solid foundation, gives durability and permanence to the structure which is to be erected. Israel's unchangeable and ever-faithful God desires to become the corner-stone of the national life, of its religion, politics, and social economy. He is the chief corner-stone of solid foundation, upon which the Hebrew theocracy was built, all the links, except the last, in the chain of the Davidic dynasty being like so many bricks in the superimposed walls. Isaiah and other prophets, however, inform us that the temple of the theocratic kingdom was not brought to its full completion. Indeed, Israel as a nation preferred to build on other foundations, and hence the prophet's message of impending national doom. But the faithful remnant kept on building until Jehovah, in the fulness of time, manifested Himself in the flesh. It was then that Christ became the chief corner-stone of the spiritual temple, the church. He is called " a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, to whom coming, ye also, as living stones, be ye built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual

sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, Wherefore also it is contained in Scripture, Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore who believe He is precious, but unto them that are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is become the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, even to them that stumble at the word, being disobedient" (I Pet. 2:4-8. Compare Eph. 2:20-22).

This living stone will try men's hearts and test their faith. Many will be offended in Him, while others who believe in Him will not be confounded. "This child," aged Simeon declares, "is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel" (Lk. 2:34). Even John the Baptist is, for a time at least, not altogether sure of himself (Matt. 11:2-6). To His faithful followers, He is the precious corner-stone of all their plans and hopes both for this world and the next, but "a stone of stumbling" to the unbelievers. Jesus warns the ecclesiastical master-builders of His day of the consequences of rejecting His messianic claims by applying to Himself the words of the twenty-second verse of Psalm 118. "And he beheld them and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Lk. 20:17-18; Matt. 21:42, 44). As the true representative of Israel, Christ undertakes to fulfil the mission in which Israel had failed.

In the light of these considerations it is perfectly obvious as to what is meant by "a precious corner-stone of solid foundation." The reference, as we have seen, is to Jehovah. He alone can be the object of the believer's faith. So, too, in the New Testament, where the apostle Paul re-echoes the thought of Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16, the

object of faith is Jehovah incarnate, or Christ, the Messiah (Rom. 9:33). This interpretation agrees also with that of the apostle Peter in I Peter 2:4-8, already quoted. The latter, in commenting on Psalm 118:22, explicitly states in the presence of Annas the high priest and other members of the Jewish Sanhedrin that Jesus Christ, "the stone which was set at nought of you builders is become the head of the corner" (Acts 4:10, 11). He is the precious corner-stone of solid foundation, upon which the long-heralded Messiah will build the walls of Zion. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:11). He is the "living stone" (I Pet. 2:4), the "spiritual Rock" (I Cor. 10:4) upon which the Church is built. If the writer of Isaiah 28:16 represents, under the figure of a well-laid foundation-stone, the quiet presence of Jehovah in Jerusalem as the only ground of trustful confidence that avails in the impending crisis, it would be the height of folly, it seems to me, to assume that Jehovah incarnate would be willing to found a purely spiritual theocracy upon anything less than the foundation already laid from the beginning of the world.

The context of the much-disputed passage in Matthew 16:18 shows that Jesus did not wish to imply that He would found His Church upon the man Peter, but upon the rocklike certitude, expressed by Him, in His Messiahship. The point in the question of Jesus, "Who say ye that I am?" was to sound the depths of the disciples' faith in the Son of man. Quick as a flash Simon Peter, the ready spokesman of the Twelve, answered the one great, fundamental question of their lives by saying, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Whatever may be the opinion of the people concerning the Prophet of Galilee, mighty in word and deed, it is the unmistakable conviction of Peter that Jesus is the Messiah.

" Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah," for the spiritual insight of a growing faith. Delighted with his confession of faith, Jesus says, " Thou art Peter (Petros), and upon this rock (petra) I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." The confession of Jesus as the Messiah is the rock (petros), and not the man Peter (Petros), upon which the Church is built. That Church is indestructible, not because it is founded on Peter or his successors, who come and go, who live and die; the powers of the world shall not prevail against a rock-like, a living, and dynamic faith in the Son of God. Such a faith is not the exclusive possession of any one man in the apostolic circle. It may be yours; it may be mine, for Christ is always building His Church upon rock-like faith.

The apostles and the disciples of all ages are only the upper rocky layer, the upper stratum, as it were, of the substratum of faith. The solid bed-rock of divine truth as it is in Jesus constitutes the mighty foundation-stone, " the Rock of Ages," upon which rock-like witnesses may rear the superstructure. In the concluding verse of the passage Jesus charges the disciples, including Peter, not to tell anyone as yet " that He was the Christ." While they had found the right foundation, upon which to build, the time was not fully ripe as yet for the proclamation of the glad tidings. Meanwhile they must retire for a season and be with Jesus. Evidently, then, the central idea of the whole passage gathers around the fundamental confession of Jesus as the Messiah, and not around the person of Simon Peter. The man who shows the firmness of a rock in making that confession may be called Satan the very moment that he begins to rebuke the Master, saying, " Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall never be unto Thee. But He turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto Me, for

thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men" (16:22-23).

But to return to the faithless politicians of Isaiah's day and their secret agreement with Egypt. The prophet exposes the hollowness of their fancied security in the resources of Egyptian military power, which can never take the place of a tranquil reliance upon the Lord's protection. Their only hope lies in a complete reversal of their military policy and in a return to the Holy One of Israel. "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength, but ye have refused; and ye have said, Upon horses will we flee; wherefore ye shall flee; and upon the swift will we ride; wherefore swift shall be those that pursue you" (30:15-16). Irreligious confidence in material power lay at the root of the political evils of the day. "Woe unto them that go down to Egypt for help and rely upon horses; and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, and Jehovah they do not seek. . . . But the Egyptians are men and not God; and their horses are flesh and not spirit; and when Jehovah stretcheth forth His hand, both helper and holpen shall stumble and fall, and they shall all perish together" (31:1, 3). According to Isaiah the really dominating forces in history are spiritual, not material; divine, not human. A spiritual religion cannot come to its highest expression by becoming an integral part of unspiritual political methods, otherwise it will lose its supremacy and partake of the limitations and weaknesses of an ephemeral political policy.

In the very nature of things military resources, native or foreign, can never be a substitute for God, since they partake of the weaknesses of all flesh; they are flesh, whereas He is spirit, whose perfection is not conditioned by change or decay. What a striking contrast between the

divine calm of God on Mount Zion and the feverish activity of scheming politicians and foreign embassies coming to Jerusalem for the purpose of forming coalitions against Assyria! "For thus hath Jehovah said unto me, I will be still, and I will look on in My dwelling place, like clear heat in sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest" (18:4). The great need of the hour is faith in God and Jerusalem will be safe. Jehovah is calmly awaiting the issue. Should Assyria act in defiance of God's will, Jehovah will interpose in behalf of His people and save them from an arrogant foe. And this is what actually happened, when Jerusalem was invested by the arrogant forces of Sennacherib. Jerusalem is saved by an act of divine interposition. Isaiah's faith in the inviolability of Jerusalem required a courageous faith in the God of history. It is such a faith as this that will abide the shock of changing circumstances. In the midst of earth's turmoil and national and international pettiness and unbelief it is the duty of the man of Judah, and of every believer in fact, to obey the divine will and to put himself on the God-ward side of the historical process. Whatever course may be pursued by unbelieving individuals and national groups, *he* must have faith in God, who, at the proper time, will come to his rescue and help him out of all his troubles. A contrary course will only end in political confusion and chaos.

Foreign alliances, moreover, are a positive menace to the perpetuity of Israel's religion. By deciding to throw in his lot with Assyria, Ahaz has really decided against Jehovah. An alliance with the Assyrian was followed, as stated above, by the importation of the magical arts and the heathen worship of the Tigris-Euphrates valley. Whether or not the alliance with Egypt, referred to in chapter 30, was fraught with equal danger to the religion of the southern kingdom we do not know. At any rate this defensive league is interpreted by the prophet as an

unmistakable sign of religious apostasy, consisting in the virtual denial of God's power to help and save His people. One might think that Jehovah were impotent and that He had abdicated His throne! "Woe to the rebellious children, saith Jehovah, carrying out a policy which is not from Me, and weaving a web without My spirit, that they may heap sin upon sin; who set forth to go down to Egypt and have not inquired at My mouth, to seek the protection of Pharaoh and to take refuge in the shadow of Egypt. But Pharaoh's protection shall be unto you for shame, and the refuge in the shadow of Egypt for confusion!" (30:1-3). However, the religious eclecticism incidental to political compacts with heathen nations only aggravated the tendency of the Hebrews to stray after false divinities. The existence of high places throughout the greater part of Israel's history was largely responsible for this. To abolish them was no easy task, as they were part and parcel of the popular religion. Even kings of the better sort, such as Uzziah and Jotham, did not remove them, "the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places" (II Kings 15:4, 35).

The inclination to idolatry was fostered by the presence of these shrines as well as by the importation of heathen superstitions from the empires along the Tigris and the Nile. If the gods of the nations were satisfied with formal rites and material offerings, would it not be possible to regain Jehovah's favour by more ample sacrifices and greater ceremonial zeal? At the central sanctuary in Jerusalem, where Jehovah was assiduously worshipped by a host of unspiritual ritualists, formal rites and ceremonies co-existed side by side with religious, moral, and social corruption. "They draw near unto Me with their lips but their heart is far from Me. . . . Of what use is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith Jehovah; I am satiated with the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of

fed beasts, and in the blood of bullocks and lambs and he-goats I take no delight. When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required of you this trampling of My courts? Bring no more worthless meal-offerings; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new-moon and the sabbath, the calling of a convocation—I cannot bear wickedness and a solemn assembly. Your new-moon festivals and your stated religious festivals My soul hateth; they are a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. Yea, when ye spread forth the palms of your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you; and although ye multiply prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, cleanse yourselves; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct the wrong of the oppressed; do justice to the orphan, plead for the widow" (29:13; 1:10-17).

As in the practically contemporaneous period of Amos and Hosea, strictness in ritual was combined with moral laxity. Indeed, the passage just cited, is a forceful reminder of Amos 5:21-24. In both Amos and Isaiah the tendency to divorce morality from religion is equally marked. The underlying cause of the prevailing moral and spiritual deterioration must be sought in the nation's idolatry, which threatened the supremacy of Jehovah. But the time will come when these no-gods, or non-entities will be cast aside as worthless by the image worshippers themselves. On that day the disappointed worshipper will "cast his no-gods of silver and his no-gods of gold, which were made for him to worship, to the moles and to the bats" (2:20).

The moral condition of Judah at this period is not unlike that of Israel in the time of Amos. There is the same avarice and greed of the rich landowners. Poor farmers, unable to meet their obligations with the promptness de-

manded of them, are ejected from their ancestral holdings under the cruel sanctions of Canaanitish law, which was fundamentally opposed to the democratic spirit of Hebrew legislation. "Woe unto them that join house to house, that annex field to field, until there is no more room, and ye are left to dwell alone in the midst of the land!" (5:8). The leaders of society are "companions of thieves" (1:23). "It is ye that have eaten up the vineyard; the plunder of the afflicted is in your houses. What mean ye that ye crush My people, and grind the face of the poor? saith the Lord. . . . Jehovah of Hosts hoped for justice, but behold bloodshed, for righteousness, but behold an outcry!" (3:14, 15; 5:7). The corrupt priesthood of the day is denounced with all the vehemence of an Amos. False prophets experience no scruples in perverting the gift of prophetic utterance to suit the passing whims of a corrupt age; they prophesy smooth things and the people love to have it so. Drunkenness prevails, "Priest and prophet reel with strong drink. . . . Woe to them that rise up early to follow strong drink, and tarry in the evening, the wine inflaming them" (28:7; 5:11).

Characteristic of the prevalent corruption is the motto, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die." The castigation of the kine of Bashan, who have sunk to the level of mere animalism (Amos 4:1 ff.), has its counterpart in Isaiah's sarcastic inventory of ornaments and foreign attire worn by the fashionable ladies of the Judæan capital. "And Jehovah said, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and go with outstretched necks and blinking eyes, tripping along as they go and making a tinkling with their feet: therefore Jehovah will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion. In that day Jehovah will take away the finery of the anklets, the sunlets and moonlets; the ear-drops and the bracelets and the fine veils; the diadems and the stepping-chains and

the girdles and the smelling-bottles and the amulets; the seal-rings and the nose-rings; the state-dresses and the tunics and the shawls and the purses; the hand mirrors and the fine linen and the turbans and the large veils. And it shall come to pass that instead of perfume there shall be rottenness, and instead of a girdle, a rope; and instead of artificial curls, baldness; and instead of a mantle, a girding of sackcloth, a brand instead of beauty" (3:16-24). Beneath this outer finery there is the inward pride of a corrupt heart. Arrogance of every sort is distasteful to Jehovah. "For Jehovah of Hosts hath a day for all that is proud and lofty. The haughty eyes of the earth-born shall be brought low, and the highness of men bowed down, and Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day" (2:11, 12).

The conditions just described throw considerable light on important aspects of Isaiah's inaugural vision in the temple. Chapter 6 begins with the words, "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a high and exalted throne." Coming to the throne when a lad of sixteen, Uzziah, as we have seen, soon developed into a successful warrior and administrator. For fifty-two years great prosperity had prevailed. But unfortunately material wealth and splendor, as so frequently, gave birth to a haughty spirit and a self-sufficient pride. Although outwardly a zealous worshipper of Jehovah, Uzziah shared the irreligious arrogance and irreverent temper of an age inflated with the careless optimism of material prosperity and earthly success. Having reached the zenith of his power, the proud king, arrayed in all his splendour, went into the temple, and attempted with his own hands to burn incense on the altar. But suddenly the haughty monarch, enraged at the opposition of the priesthood, is smitten with leprosy. He now retires to a lazar-house, there to spend the rest of his days. In the year 740 B. C., or thereabouts,

Judah's sovereign dies and sinks into a leper's grave, thus terminating the glorious reign of a once powerful ruler. One day, in the year of Uzziah's death, the youth Isaiah wended his way, as he had done many times before, to the temple, greatly perplexed perhaps by recent events. That day he had a most remarkable experience. In fact, it was the cardinal experience in the life of a youthful patriot, by which a Judæan citizen was converted into the greatest prophet of Old Testament times.

That day he had a vision of the invisible and eternal, of the unchanging and abiding realities behind and beyond the changing scenes of life. While worshipping in the court of the men of Israel, he saw, not Uzziah, nor any of the princes of this world who come and go, who live and die; he beheld the sovereign Ruler of all the universe, the true King of men, sitting upon a lofty throne, and exalted above time and eternity. The veil of the outer temple is drawn aside, as it were, and there is revealed to the reverent worshipper Israel's King in all His majesty seated upon a throne high and lifted up above all earthly thrones, "and His train filled the temple." With reverential self-restraint the prophet does not attempt to describe the indescribable nor to put into words that which is ineffable. Mention is made of the flowing, billowy folds of the royal mantle and of the seraphic attendants about the throne, who constituted His retinue. Jehovah Himself is not described, nor are the winged messengers themselves except to indicate that they veiled their faces and their feet before the adorable presence of the Holy One of Israel. Two of the six wings of each seraph were held in perfect readiness for swift obedience to the divine mandate. At Jehovah's right and left (I Kings 22:19) the seraphim, arranged in two rows, presently lifted up their voices, singing unceasingly, like the chanting temple choirs of priests and Levites, their antiphonal hymn of praise in

honour of a thrice holy God, "Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of Hosts; the fulness of the whole earth is His glory." The voices blend and swell into the sublime and powerful strains of the Thrice-Holy, and the reverberating sound seems to shake the foundations of the threshold, and "the house is filled with smoke," as at other times when God descended to communicate with men (Ex. 40:34; I Kings 8:10, 11; Ezek. 10:4). Hiding themselves with their wings from the glory of the divine presence, the seraphim give expression to the intense holiness of Jehovah in contrast with the low moral standards of an irreverent age. What Isaiah's contemporaries needed was a sense of religious awe and reverential trust in the sovereign power of God, whom they were dishonouring by their irreligious materialism. Want of reverence and humility in religion usually degenerates into the heartlessness of Pharisaic self-aggrandizement. Through a presumptuous act, Uzziah learns by bitter experience that the God of Israel is infinitely holy, and not like the man-made gods of Israel's neighbours. Jehovah is God and not man, divine, not human, and absolutely transcendent above all flesh. What folly, therefore, for a nation to put its trust in military resources and in the purchased protection of earthly potentates!

Israel needs to learn that Jehovah is the God of all the earth. As compared with Jehovah of Hosts neither foreign gods nor political compacts with external powers will avail. The Lord of the hosts of heaven and earth has a rightful claim to the undivided allegiance of the armies of Israel and of all the sons of men. But Israel, by virtue of a divided heart and a divided allegiance, has lost the divine favour, which cannot be regained by a multitude of sacrifices, for "the fulness of the whole earth is His glory." In the case of Israel, God's glory is seen in a series of gracious historical acts. (Num. 14:21 ff.; Isa. 5:16.)

His glory may also be seen in the material world, in the works of nature and of grace. But, alas, Israel, blinded by materialistic pride, is no longer conscious of Jehovah's majesty and glory. In the opening verses of the first chapter of Isaiah, the prophet exclaims, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for Jehovah hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib: Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider. Ah, sinful nation, people laden with guilt, seed of evildoers! wayward children! They have forsaken Jehovah, they have rejected Israel's Holy One" (1:2-4). The sin of Israel is pride and insensibility to the moral perfection of Israel's Holy One, who is a holy fire, consuming all that is unclean. Conscious of his implication in the nation's sin and guilt, the awe-struck worshipper in the temple experiences for the first time in his life an overpowering sense of sin. The sin of Isaiah is not more heinous than that of his countrymen; indeed, he may not have been as wicked as the reckless sinners in Judah. But it matters not. Whatever virtues he may possess, whatever of light there may be within his soul, all is eclipsed and turned into darkness in a glory so ineffable and in a holiness so intense and infinite. He does not measure his life by the low standards of his co-religionists. He has had a vision of the transcendent Holy One of Israel and that was enough to convince him of his own sinfulness.

Born and reared in a sinful environment, he feels his solidarity with the sinful nation of which he is a part. In the all-searching light of God's moral perfection, there can be no self-excusing. Thank God, Isaiah is not the kind of man who refuses to face the facts. He is keenly aware of the awfulness of it all and there leaps from his lips the agonizing cry, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I

am a man of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of Hosts." The sin of his unprophetic lips is uppermost in Isaiah's mind, because he had just been listening to the seraphic hymn of adoring praise sung by the pure lips of sinless beings. Neither he nor his people dare mingle their polluted praise with the antiphonal worship of that pure, sinless host. His unclean lips disqualify him from participation in a service so sublime; he must remain dumb and praiseless while the adoring hosts lift up the strains of that august anthem which has furnished a worthy theme for the adoring hosts of Christendom. Oh, the agony of that disability which the prophet must have felt! But the confession of his sin is followed by an act of forgiving mercy. One of Jehovah's attendants flew to the altar and, taking up the tongs, seized with them a glowing stone from the never-extinguished fire of the altar of incense, "and he caused it to touch my mouth and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is forgiven." His sin forgiven, the youth Isaiah is seized with a loving impulse to enter Jehovah's service. Needing a qualified messenger to bear a much-needed message to His people, the King, inviting voluntary and ungrudging service, now asks the question, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" To this question the young volunteer, without inquiring into the nature of his mission, eagerly responds, "Here am I; send me."

The content of the message itself rests with God. It cannot destroy the resolute self-surrender of a thoroughly consecrated life; no, not even in the face of a crushing task. Isaiah had seen God, and his sinful self, had confessed his sin and experienced the inexpressible joy of divine forgiveness. The man for whom God had done so much is now ready for the unconditional service of a whole-hearted consecration. His spontaneous offer is

accepted by the startling announcement that his message, instead of leading to the conversion and salvation of the people of Israel and Judah, would but harden their hearts and render them insensible to the prophet's appeals. "Go and say to this people, Hear on but understand not, and see without ceasing but perceive not. Make impervious the heart of this people, and make dull its ears, and seal up its eyes, lest it see with its eyes, and hear with its ears, and its heart understand, and it turn again and be healed." Failure to profit by repeated opportunities of learning God's will, whether by prophetic word or providential means, is exceedingly dangerous. By the law of progression an attitude of indifference or defiance, once assumed, brings its own penalty. It becomes increasingly improbable that the old sinful course will be abandoned. The message that fails of its intended purpose always has a hardening effect upon men's hearts. By rejecting such a message the hardened sinner virtually pronounces his own doom, for while the Word of God saves, it also condemns.

No Israelite can withdraw himself from the influence of the prophetic message without altering his moral and religious status. So far as man is concerned the obduracy is self-caused, God only continuing the process begun and continued by human guilt. There is a progressiveness about sin which is always accompanied by an increasing incapacity to abandon it. Although the repetition of the message will only tend to increase the obduracy of the people, Isaiah must continue to plead with them and hope against hope. That the nation as a whole will not heed the admonitions given is quite clear to the prophet from the very beginning of his ministry. Nevertheless, he must devote himself to his divinely appointed task with increasing zeal, and make known to them what he has seen and heard in the hope that individuals with receptive hearts may still be reached. Filled with compassion for his

brethren in the flesh, the prophet anxiously inquires, "How long, O Lord," will they persist in their sinful course? The answer comes that, as soon as the existing evil tendencies have worked themselves out, a consecrated and purified remnant of the people would survive the fiery trials of Assyrian invasion, deportation, and exile. In other words, the national tree will be cut down, but the hidden root will remain, to which the prophet may look for the vigorous growth of a more consecrated national life. "And he said, Until cities fall into ruin and be left without an inhabitant, and houses without an occupant, and the land become utterly desolate, and Jehovah have deported the population, and great be the emptiness in the midst of the land; and if there be left a tenth therein, that shall again be for the fire. Like the terebinth and like the oak, whose stock when they are felled remaineth in them, so the consecrated descendants shall be the stock thereof."

In the light of that overpowering vision, Isaiah has no other choice but to announce the coming doom. What he has seen and heard corresponds in all essentials with the message which he is to deliver. He has seen the King in the glorious majesty of His infinite holiness, and he becomes at once the unrelenting foe of materialism in religion, politics, and every other department of life. He pronounces a woe upon the callous heartlessness of all lip-worship, upon projected alliances with external powers, and upon the confused moral standards of the time (5:20). The scoffing unbelief of scornful sceptics, ridiculing the very idea of divine retribution, and hurling a defiant challenge into the face of the Almighty, is an illustration of the hardening effect of irreligious self-sufficiency (5:18, 19; 29:15). The defiant independence of material wealth seemed to proclaim that they had no further need of God. The needs of the hour are inter-

preted in terms of economics. Everybody has his price, from the revelling priests and prophets down to the mercenary armies of foreign potentates. Money is the great solvent, a never-failing antidote for every ill. In time of danger from without recourse must be had, of course, not to the Jehovah of a bygone age, but to their own means or to the purchased protection of foreign armies.

Once again we are confronted with the prosaic fact that outward prosperity is often a stimulus to the growth of materialism. Instead of leading men to God, earthly success only too often acts as a check upon the growth of a religious consciousness. Thus it frequently happens that outward prosperity and inward piety are, for all practical purposes at least, contradictory terms. Why is our prophet entrusted with a message of doom? Because a highly favoured nation had sunk to the dead level of gross materialism, and thereby lost its faith in the deeper realities of life. A proud reliance in the abundance of its wealth and the strength of its armaments meant an impoverished and weakened faith. The pervading sins of greed and self-indulgence, of pride, arrogance, and self-willed apostasy blinded their spiritual vision and deadened their religious sensibilities. The sins of the time may all be resolved into a want of faith. Whatever may be the outcome of his ministry in the midst of an unbelieving and faithless generation, Isaiah must proclaim the full import of his inaugural vision. Though spiritually dead, both Israel and Judah must be brought face to face with a righteous God, with the King of men, seated upon the glorious throne of His transcendent holiness, and highly exalted above the follies and sins of men. When Isaiah saw the King in the temple, he was convinced of sin in order that he might convince of sin the reckless sinners of Israel and Judah. Will they hearken to his message and repent, or harden their hearts as in the great provocation

in the wilderness? O Israel, repent and live! If God has forgiven the sins of a man of unclean lips, will He not forgive others whose lips are unclean? O what a terrible thing it is to be indifferent to the call of repentance! Indifferent Israel, and later indifferent Judah, blinded by the deadening effect of unbelief, took the fatal plunge predicted by the prophet.

We have gone rather carefully into the details of Isaiah's inaugural vision because every line of it speaks with such telling force to the young men of today. Essential to a call to the ministry is a vision of God, of our sinful self, and of our obligations to God and man.

Observe, in the first place, that at the commencement of his prophetic career Isaiah had a vision of God. That vision converted him into the great evangelical prophet of the Old Testament. He saw God, and that explains why he became a prophet. It makes all the difference in the world whether a man sees God or looks with steadfast and blear-eyed avarice at earthly things. The upward gaze elevates character, the downward look blinds our spiritual vision and lowers us to the level of a soul-less animalism. Whether a man soars to the spiritual heights of vision or creeps upon the earth, is determined by his seeing. The course of history is shaped by men who look in a God-ward direction. Moses, Isaiah, Saul of Tarsus, and other immortals had a vision of the spiritual, and their mighty deeds thrilled a world groping in spiritual darkness. Whatever may have been their peculiar qualifications for the work which they were called to do, this vision of the spiritual was the most indispensable part of their equipment. Physical and mental qualifications must be subjected to the vitalizing process of a great religious experience. Isaiah's writings as a whole justify the assertion that he was one of the best educated Hebrews in the latter half of the eighth century before our era. For liter-

ary merit he has found no successful rival in prophetic literature. But what is literary merit when compared with the vision of a man of religious faith? The transfiguring touch of a great religious experience has given permanence to what otherwise might have perished. To be complete, a man's education must always be supplemented by a vision of God. While it is true that the ministry is losing much of its prestige because many of the best educated young men in the colleges of our land are not entering the ministry as they should, the fact remains that a man may pass through the ordinary routine of college, and even of seminary life, and yet lack the prophetic gift.

The prime qualification of a prophetic preacher is that he be a religious man himself. Before he begins to interpret the religious experiences of others he should first pass through a similar experience himself. A purely historical religion leaves men cold. An intellectual grasp of the facts of divine revelation will not suffice. What the Church needs is not sounding brass or tinkling cymbals, but men who have seen some aspect of the divine and the eternal, and then men, realizing that "we do speak the things that we have seen and heard," will cry out, "What shall we do to be saved?" Before we can interpret God to others, we must see and know Him. Then we can tell others what we have seen, and on the basis of such an experience, teach with convincing power the objective facts of divine revelation.

What was it Isaiah saw that day? Although he gives no description of Jehovah, the prophet tells us that he saw the Lord, the true King of men. He speaks of the glorious majesty of a personal Being and not of an impersonal power or blind fate. Seated on the throne of the universe is Jehovah of Hosts, ruling over the destinies of men, and not the self-executing laws of nature or the evolutionary principle of natural science. Does it ever occur to our

modern sages that the theory of evolution is at best nothing more than a working hypothesis in a realm which deals with physical and not with spiritual phenomena? The scientist who forgets that "God is spirit and not flesh" will never discover anything else in the universe but matter itself. If he is a wise man he will confine himself to his own realm, and not attempt to sound out the hidden depths of the spiritual world with the aid of the geologist's hammer or the testing-tube of the chemical laboratory. When he confines himself to that which is physical and material, concrete and tangible, we cannot but listen to him with respect. But as soon as he oversteps these bounds and says, "There is no God," then we are reminded of the words of the psalmist, when he says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." For a vision of the spiritual, more is needed than a microscope, more even than a telescopic instrument by which we may get a glimpse of the planets and stars nearest to us. Unless he be a spiritual man himself, the scientist, with all his philosophical speculations, will never get beyond the conclusions of pure reason (Kant) or the dictum of agnosticism (Spencer). In the realm of the spirit, the inner eye or the eye of faith, is the categorical imperative. Faith is an indispensable prerequisite to a vision of God. The young man of today must choose between these modern sages, who know so much of the visible world but so little of the world invisible, and men like Moses and Isaiah, Peter and Paul, who, by a vision of things unseen and eternal, have liberated the souls of untold myriads from the shackles of materialistic unbelief.

Such a vision may come to a man at almost any time. To Isaiah it came in the year of Uzziah's death. The sombre aspects of life are often full of spiritual meaning to the man who has eyes to see. Not infrequently they furnish the occasion for momentous life decisions. Isaiah

dates his prophetic call from the year of Uzziah's death. The definiteness of the prophet's memory may be somewhat disconcerting to those who look upon the time-element in the call to a prophetic ministry as an unmistakable token of its genuineness. To most of us, however, the call comes, not suddenly but gradually amid the slow processes of a ripening Christian experience. No two men are called to the ministry in precisely the same way. Some are called in childhood, others in early youth, and still others in manhood.

But the call of God may come not only at sundry times but also in sundry places. Isaiah's inaugural vision took place on familiar ground. The framework of his wonderful vision is furnished by the temple. As a youth he had often stood among the worshipping multitudes on the temple area, with its officiating priesthood and sacrificial ritual. But now, not very far from the spot where Uzziah had been punished for his irreverence, the familiar sights and sounds of the temple ritual suddenly give place to the reality hidden behind them. Like Samuel and Isaiah of old, we, too, may have a vision of the spiritual in God's appointed house, if only our worship be sincere and free from the taint of a heartless lip-worship. Under proper conditions the house of God may be converted into the very gate of heaven itself. God pity the man whose church-going ends in worldliness or in the self-righteousness of the ancient or modern Pharisee.

In the second place, it is well to remember that a believing sight of God's glorious majesty and holiness must always be accompanied by a vision of ourselves in the light of God's moral perfection. Isaiah did not assume that he was better than the average Israelite. He did not attempt to wear the filthy rags of human work righteousness. He was no Pharisee; neither was he a mediæval monk. No man can see God aright without feeling his

own sinfulness and his oneness with a sinful race. He is conscious of his own sinful nature as well as of the universality of sin. But once recognizing that truth, he immediately confesses his sin and is forgiven. Like Isaiah, we, too, must confess our sins and God Himself will touch our unprophetic lips with the baptismal fire of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 3:11).

Doubtless many of you have been thinking, Oh, if it were only possible for me to have a supernatural vision of things unseen, then I, too, might hope to become an Isaiah. Brethren, let me remind you of the comforting fact that the eternal world which lies beyond the reach of our mortal eyes still opens to the touch of faith. St. John, in his twelfth chapter, tells us that Israel's prophet of faith beheld Christ Himself: "He saw His glory," he says, "and spake of Him" (12:41). You, too, may see Jehovah incarnate with the eye of faith. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Isaiah's vision, then, resolves itself into the question, Have you by faith beheld Jesus Christ? Have you seen Christ? "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?" (John 14:9, 10). You and I may have a believing sight of the glory of our exalted Lord on cross-crowned Calvary. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Men are attracted to His throne by the dynamic of the cross. To the eye of faith the reality of the prophet's vision now becomes permanent in the transfigured Christ, the manifest Jehovah. All that Isaiah saw is found in greater profusion in the brightness of a fuller revelation. The Son of God is at once the King of glory, the all-sufficient sacrifice on the altar of infinite love, and the absolving seraph, who can remove every form of impurity resting upon our sinful lips and hearts. "Behold the

Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Have you and I seen ourselves in the light of His loving sacrifice for sin? Have we been overwhelmed not only by a vision of His holiness and His moral perfection, but also by His condescending love? Have we confessed our sins and been forgiven? Have our hearts been stirred into action by the consciousness of sins forgiven?

Isaiah's vision, in the third place, is not complete without a vision of duty. Pardoned and forgiven, he rises at once to the regal heights of a voluntary service at the call of a holy but gracious Deity. The driving power of a grateful heart finds expression in ungrudging service to God and man. He did not lull his conscience to sleep, like so many lip-serving ritualists in the temple courts, by adding a sacrificial thank-offering to his sin-offering, for "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." The flocks and herds "on a thousand hills are Mine, saith the Lord." Nor did he regard the shekels in his possession as an equivalent for personal service, for "the silver and the gold is Mine." His gratitude did not stop with the giving of things; he gave himself by presenting his body as a living sacrifice upon the altar of a whole-hearted service. He believed in consecrating his whole personality and all that he had to the service of an exceedingly gracious God. He made the members of his immediate family contribute to the one great mission of his life. He was married to "the prophetess" (8:1 ff.) and had two sons, whose names expressed two important aspects of his teaching. The name of the one was "Swift-booty-speedy-prey" (Maher-shalal-hash-baz), and foretokened the speedy downfall of Damascus and Samaria. Shear-yashub (7:3), the name of his other son, bore witness to Isaiah's prediction that a remnant of the people should return from exile to the land of their fathers (6:13; 10:22). His

own name, "Jehovah is salvation," and the names of his children were for prophetic signs and tokens in Israel (8:18). He could say with the apostle, "This one thing I do."

The man, who ascends the hill of the Lord to look with steadfast gaze on God made manifest in the flesh, will soon discover under the shadow of the cross that his vision of Christ must be supplemented by a vision of his Christian duty. There will spring up spontaneously within him a desire to serve Him whose name he bears, and whose follower he pretends to be. To him the sense of pardon is a sufficient motive for voluntary service. He does not need to be pressed into service by the irresistible compulsions of Omnipotence. His only motive is the compulsion of love to Him, "who first loved us." The divine call is an inner necessity to Isaiah and to every pardoned sinner who has heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" There is no sluggish indecision on his part in answering the divine call for a messenger, which was expressed in general terms, for his name is not even mentioned. Nevertheless there leaps from his lips the immediate response, "Here am I, send me." Nothing is said of the natural qualifications which are deemed necessary for the prophetic office. These are presupposed because they precede the actual call to service. It is interesting to note in this connection that although Isaiah has been prepared for his work by a vision of God and the assurance of divine forgiveness, it is not until he freely offers himself for the work to which he has been called that God bids him go and tell what he has seen and heard. He is actuated by motives far above the low level of an irksome duty; he has ascended to the lofty level of inclination and of a glad choice.

How far removed is the joyous consecration of Isaiah to his task from the imperfect and unwilling consecration of

many of the most brilliant young men in our city churches! How is it that the great majority of young men possessing more than average ability are so unlike Isaiah in this respect? Are those most qualified for the work of the ministry freely offering themselves for service as they ought? The truth of the matter is that many of our most talented young men often deem themselves too good for the ministry. Having been attracted by the dollar-mark on the brow of mammon, they freely dedicate their talents to the god of riches. This is an age in which things are measured for the most part in terms of economic values, all superficial protestations to the contrary notwithstanding. An alarmingly small percentage of the brightest boys in college ever find their way into the ministry. Infected as they are with the materialistic mammon-worship of the age they, of course, have made other plans. They are determined to make their mark in the business world; they must become mechanical and civil engineers, chemists and doctors, corporation lawyers and stock brokers, anything else, in short, but consecrated ministers of the gospel. Do you say that many qualified young men pass by the ministry because they no longer regard it as a man's job? My friend, be honest with yourself. Your own argument points to the fact that a higher estimate is placed upon things material than upon the deeper realities of life, otherwise the young men in question would turn to the ministry and *make* it a man's job. Most of these young men have never seen God in His majesty and holiness, or if they did the confession and removal of their sins has never prompted them to the grateful act of a voluntary service to God and their fellowmen. Jehovah incarnate has been saying for well-nigh two thousand years, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And the potential Isaiahs of today remain speechless and therefore praiseless in the presence of Him to whom they owe every

blessing both temporal and spiritual. Some of them may be saying in muffled tones, "Send me, Lord; I will follow Thee some day, if Thou wilt suffer me first to do this or that" (Matt. 8:21-22), and meanwhile they drift into lucrative positions. By putting off their decision to a more convenient season they have stifled their consciences; they have lost the vision of the spiritual by riveting their attention upon the things of earth.

Procrastination in religion is always fatal, as may be seen from the hardened materialists of Isaiah's day. How strange, how passing strange, that while the works of nature reflect the glory of an infinitely wise Creator, only man is vile and refuses to show forth the transcendent glory of a gracious God! Oh, how the heart of the Church yearns for men of strong spiritual faith with acute ethical perceptions, and who are keenly sensitive to the religious and moral conditions of their age! The Church is calling, as never before, for men of faith, with a vision of the spiritual and with an impelling sense of pardon, eager to volunteer for service. Willingness to serve comes from a believing sight of God and an experience of divine forgiveness. Do you really believe in God? If so, you are bound to make known that faith unto others. Have you experienced His pardoning mercy? If so, you too have a commission to the unclean. A dynamic and working faith is satisfied with nothing short of a living sacrifice upon the altar of loving service. Do not wait for a supernatural vision in the hope of becoming an Isaiah. Do not wait for a stirring call to a conspicuous task, requiring more than average ability. Do not wait for great opportunities which seldom come to the average man. And since men of the Isaiah-type are so extremely scarce, let us be willing to do the work of an average man, for, after all, the great bulk of the world's work is done not by Isaiahs but by average men like ourselves. To meet the

crying needs of the Church, God is calling not for men who are waiting to have their work thrust upon them, but for volunteers, rejoicing at the opportunity of declaring the vision which they have seen. The Church is almost overwhelmed with opportunities to "go in and possess the land." But alas! many an opportunity passes by unimproved for lack of ministers and missionaries to take the lead in this glorious conquest. Are the young men of our churches equal to the challenge? Are there no boys or young men, no high school or college students in our congregations, who ought to become ministers of the gospel and missionaries of the cross of Jesus Christ? What Christian young man will be the first to volunteer for service in the home and foreign field? If the love of Christ is in your heart, you will instinctively exclaim, "Here am I, send me! Send me to my unchristian friends and acquaintances; send me anywhere in the wide world, for I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me."

## VII

## THE CALL OF JEREMIAH

### Jeremiah 1:4-19

ALMOST a hundred years after Isaiah began his ministry, Jeremiah was born of a priestly family in Anathoth, a small town about three miles northeast of Jerusalem. "The son of Hilkiah" doubtless received a good literary training, especially at a time when the literary treasures of the nation were in the hands of the priests. Unlike Isaiah, he never experienced the comforts of a home of his own, "Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place" (16:2). As the herald of the approaching dissolution of a doomed commonwealth, he is to remain unmarried, because the inhabitants of the land are soon to perish by the sword, by famine and pestilence. He was regarded as a pessimist, and sneered at, ridiculed and persecuted by all classes of society. His unwelcome message fell upon deaf ears. Those who should have known better opposed him in his work and laid violent hands upon him. Being only a man and not the Man of Sorrows of a later period, he occasionally (11:20; 15:15; 18:21-23) gave vent to his feelings after the manner of the imprecatory psalms. His life was a prolonged martyrdom. The moods of a great prophet vary, like those of other men, with the stress of the hour, and hence we are not surprised to find here and there a cry of anguish and of unspeakable pain in spite of all self-mastery. What makes this great prophet so intensely interesting is that he lays bare to his readers, in the

form of a series of confessions, the inmost thoughts and feelings of his own soul, from which we learn to know the man in his weakness as well as his strength. He is by nature a psychologist, who tries to analyze the motives of the heart. He dissects his own mind and reflects upon his own personal experiences. Turning from his unsympathetic contemporaries to himself, he looks within, and discovers that religion, after all, is a matter of the heart. He emphasizes the inwardness of religion, the value of which is no longer determined by a national relationship to the God of Israel but by a personal fellowship with God.

He is the prophet of personal piety. By this we do not mean to imply that there was no personal piety in Israel before the time of Jeremiah. All that we mean to say is that Jeremiah is the first prophet to emphasize, more than any of his predecessors, the personal note in religion. Amos, as we have seen, gave to it the ethical note; Hosea interpreted religion in terms of a holy love; Isaiah emphasized the need of faith; and now Jeremiah says that the destruction of the nation as such will not involve a like fate for its religion, for true piety consists in the fellowship of the individual soul with God. These great truths of religion come to a focus in the prophet of the new covenant, written on the heart of the individual. Jeremiah, if not the greatest of the prophets, stands second only to Isaiah.

Our prophet reminds us of Hosea, who prophesied at an equally critical moment in the history of the northern kingdom. The decline and fall of Israel and Judah respectively is ascribed by both prophets to religious apostasy. Throughout the entire history of both kingdoms idolatry was extremely popular. As early as the time of Ahaz, Assyrian idolatry had been introduced with great splendour in Jerusalem; and through the untheocratic policy of this faithless king, Judah became tributary to

Assyria. Instead of trusting in Jehovah, Ahaz wanted to secure the favour of the gods of his powerful overlord. Later, under the influence of Isaiah, Hezekiah "removed the high places, and broke the statues, and cut down the groves, and broke in pieces the brazen serpent" (II Kings 18:4). This was the first organized attempt to banish the worst features of idolatry from the religion of the fathers. Unhappily, Hezekiah died when Manasseh was only twelve years of age. Under the baleful influence of the aristocratic heathen party in Jerusalem, Hezekiah's reforms were neutralized during the bloody, reactionary reign of his apostate son. The latter did not simply aim at a complete restoration of the idolatrous practices which Ahaz had introduced; the temple became a veritable pantheon for all sorts of imaginary gods. There was Baal and Ashtoreth, Moloch and a host of star-gods. Special attention was paid to star-worship, because it was an integral part of the official religion of the Assyrians. Manasseh, at this time, was an Assyrian vassal, who seemed to think that a dependent relation to Assyria argued the superiority of that nation's gods. Assyrian idolatry, at any rate, so it was argued, had the prestige of splendid success, whereas the devotees of Jehovah-worship had sunk to the level of political impotence. Why not worship these gods in place of Jehovah, or if Jehovah is to be worshipped at all, let it be of such a character that it cannot be distinguished from the idolatrous worship of the surrounding nations, since the God of Israel is only one of many gods.

These gods, it appears, were worshipped with an ardour akin to madness. Manasseh himself led the way in sacrificing his own son to Moloch in the Valley of Hinnom (II Chron. 33:6. See also II Kings 16:3). It was hoped by such means to appease the divine anger and to compel the gods to accede to the desires of their votaries. After Manasseh's death, Amon followed in his father's

footsteps by adhering to the religious tenets of heathenism. Idolatry was still the official religion when Josiah came to the throne. The year before Jeremiah began his ministry, the pious king undertook in all earnest the tremendous task of abolishing the public manifestations of idolatry without being able, of course, to change the idolatrous hearts of his subjects. The stately high places in Judah and about Jerusalem were destroyed, together with the various Baal-altars, "and the Asherim, and the carven images and the molten images" (II Chron. 34:3). The work of reformation was extended to the territory formerly occupied by the tribes of northern Israel. Bands of official iconoclasts went everywhere, destroying the grosser forms of idolatry in all parts of the land. In appearance at least, Jehovah-worship had once more come into its own, for the purified seat of Baal-worship in the very heart of the temple soon became the exclusive centre of public worship. The right of worshipping at local shrines and chapels was abrogated by law, all public worship being confined to the one legal sanctuary at Jerusalem. Outwardly, that is to say, from the point of view of the externals of religion, all was well. But alas, seventy years of idolatry had left an indelible mark upon the religious consciousness of the people. The well-meaning king could not check the idolatrous inclinations of a people whose hearts had been permanently estranged from the living God. Multitudes of ritualists gathered in the temple courts to perform with the strictest punctiliousness every detail of the ceremonial part of religion. To them rites and ceremonies constituted the sum and substance of religion. This unspiritual and superficial view of religion was really a legacy from their former heathen associations. The image-worshippers of heathen antiquity looked upon ritualistic formulas and ceremonies as the beginning and end of religion. Such inherited notions of religion inevitably resulted in that empty formal-

ism which was so abhorrent to Jeremiah when he began his ministry (626 B. C.). It was commonly supposed that ceremonial worship would be just as pleasing to the God of Israel as it had been to the imaginary gods of the past. And, worst of all, they would not persuade themselves to worship Jehovah alone; they still clung to their old patron saints.

To uproot the ingrained idolatry of the past seventy years was next to impossible. That Josiah's reforms only touched the surface of things is clearly recognized by Jeremiah. Almost immediately on his being called to office, he receives instructions to go and proclaim his first message in the metropolis, from which we gather that the reformation of Josiah was far from successful. The dominant subject of that discourse is Judah's idolatry, which is denounced by him in terms similar to those found in Hosea. The latter's figure of marriage is also appropriated with a view to pointing out the deep intimacy of the nation's reciprocal relation to Jehovah. Jeremiah begins his first prophetic discourse (chapters 2-6) by recalling the far happier days of the nation's infancy, when the young virgin followed her divine husband with all the loving devotion of a true attachment. "The word of Jehovah was communicated to me, saying, Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, I remember for thy sake the loving kindness of thy youth, the love of thy betrothal, thy following of Me in the desert, in a land unsown." The arbitrariness of Israel's defection from Jehovah is so unnatural. The beast of burden in Isaiah's time is led by a truer instinct than rebellious Israel, for "the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib," Israel, on the other hand, is no longer conscious of its dependence upon God. Jeremiah makes a similar observation when he says that "the very stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle-dove and the crane and the swallow

observe the time of their arrival" (8:7); not so Judah. What the migratory instinct is to the birds of the air, that religion ought to be to the heart of man; man alone is untrue to the law of his being. But Judah's ingratitude to God is not only unnatural; it is also most unreasonable and without precedent. "Hear ye the word of Jehovah, O house of Jacob, and all the clans of the house of Israel! What injustice did your fathers find in Me, that they went far from Me and followed idols? Hath a heathen nation changed gods, though they are no-gods?" But apostate Israel "hath forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, to hew out for themselves cisterns that cannot hold water" (2:18). Why drink of the soiled waters of the Nile and of the Euphrates, when the Fountain of living waters was still in their midst? Why seek foreign alliances and the protection of foreign gods, when simple trust in the Almighty would produce far better results? Will they ever learn that the religion of the Hebrews will never mix with heathen politics? For some reason the ungrateful nation has always manifested, to a greater or less degree, an uncontrollable impulse to idolatry. "For long ago didst thou break thy yoke, didst thou burst thy bonds, and saidst, I will not obey; for upon every high hill, and under every green tree thou wert crouching in fornication, saying to a block, Thou art my father, and to a stone, Thou didst bring me forth; for they have turned to Me the back and not the face; yet in the time of their calamity they will say, Arise and deliver us!"

There were gods many and cults many; each city had its own tutelary god, and Jerusalem was filled with the incense altars of false gods. "I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a genuine seed; how then art thou changed with respect to Me into the wild offshoots of a foreign vine? Though thou wash thyself with nitre and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is ingrained before Me, saith

the Lord Jehovah." In the third chapter of his prophecy Jeremiah continues, "And Jehovah said unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen what apostate Israel did? She went upon every high mountain, and under every green tree, and played the harlot there. And I said, after she had done all these things, Return unto Me, but she did not return; and her faithless sister Judah," instead of avoiding the sin which had brought destruction upon northern Israel, "went and played the harlot also. Judah hath not turned unto Me with her whole heart, but with falsehood, saith Jehovah." What Judah needed above all else was not a reformation of the externals of religion but a regeneration of the human heart. Nothing short of sincere repentance can save a doomed nation. Hence the prophet says, "O Jerusalem, cleanse thy heart from wickedness. Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves unto Jehovah, and take away the foreskins of your heart" (4:14, 3, 4). The outer symbol must become an inner reality. By the shedding of the blood of circumcision the offspring of the chosen race was consecrated to God. It was the sign of the covenant by which the individual Israelite was admitted to membership in the Old Testament Church. But this initiatory act must lead to an inner heart relationship between the God of Israel and His covenant people, and not to the perfunctory exercise of religious formalism. But how shall the mainspring of human action be changed? How shall the hardened sinner break with the habitual sins of his guilty past? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then shall ye also be able to do good that are accustomed to do evil" (13:23).

Reprobate silver and dross cannot be purified in the furnace of affliction (6:27 ff.). God only can reform and change them. He will give them a new heart and put His

law in their inward parts. In that new age the old broken covenant will be superseded by a new covenant, written not on tables of stone, but on the tables of individual hearts. Such a covenant cannot fail because God's love will be the conspicuous all-determining factor (31:3). "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put My law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts" (31:33). The cumbersome, ritualistic requirements of the old covenant will be done away. Men will no longer depend for their knowledge of God upon the Aaronic priesthood; they shall know Him at first hand. In view of man's direct access to God the priests shall no longer teach their brother Israelites, saying, "Know Jehovah, for they shall know Me, from the least even unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah; for I will pardon their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more. I will make with them an everlasting covenant" (31:34; 32:40). For the present, however, the joy of the prophet was restrained by the thought of his people's unwillingness to meet the conditions of the new age. They persisted in their stubbornness of heart, and so it was determined in the providence of God that they should drink the cup of suffering to the very dregs.

To avoid impending doom a real and not a nominal reformation was needed. But the nation would not forsake the flagrant immoralities of heathenism which had been dominant throughout the long and disastrous reign of Manasseh. The exhortations of the prophet to repentance were met with the defiant declaration, "There is no hope, for we will follow our own devices and will act each according to the obstinacy of his wicked heart" (18:12). In view of the inveterate propensity of the Jews to idolatrous indulgences there can be no immediate prospect for improvement in the prevailing social and moral conditions

"The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond it is graven upon the tablet of their heart, and upon the horns of their altars" (17:1). The long reign of heathen-hearted Manasseh had corrupted the whole fabric of society; high and low alike are corrupt (chaps. 5 and 9). The moral causes of the coming disaster are not unlike those of the earlier prophets.

The call of Jeremiah is described in the opening chapter (vv. 4-19) of his prophecy. His mission was originated to supplement Josiah's reformation which amounted to nothing more than a revival of external religion. The young prophet did not expect too much from the iconoclastic purification of public worship which led to no change in the inward disposition of the people. There was required a spiritual regeneration which the youthful statesman could not inaugurate. Personal spiritual work needed to be done. It remained for the prophet to speak to the heart of Judah. Whether or not the nation would repent is not for him to determine.

In the thirteenth year of Josiah (626 B. C.) "the word of Jehovah came unto me saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I selected thee, and before thou camest forth from the womb I consecrated thee; I appointed thee a prophet unto the nations." Under what circumstances, or where, he received his call we do not know. As Anathoth was only two or three miles distant from Jerusalem, we are inclined to think that the event took place in one of the courts of the temple, whither he had gone to worship. This supposition is founded on verse 9, which is strongly reminiscent of the call of Isaiah (Isa. 6:7). Like Isaiah, he spent his active ministry in Jerusalem. While no mention is made of an appearance of Jehovah, "the word of Jehovah" came to him with all the force of a personal call to the prophetic office. That he had been divinely chosen before his birth for a special work must have been of some

comfort to the potential priest, facing a great but cheerless task. Does this act of consecration furnish a parallel to the vow of Hannah, which if once made was irrevocable, since the object of that vow became forthwith God's property? Or does it mean that the unborn son of a priest was consecrated, as a matter of course, to the service of God, since the members of the priestly tribe belonged, in a very peculiar sense, to Jehovah? In any event, the result is the same, whether the prophet was divinely chosen before or after conception. Jeremiah realizes that he belongs absolutely to his Maker, that God has a perfect right to do with His property as He Himself sees fit, and that whatever gifts have been bestowed upon him must be employed in the service of God and man. However, divine predestination in this case is not identical with fatalism or an absolute decree from which there is no escape. If Jeremiah had regarded it as such, why should he even attempt to argue the point in the hope of escaping the responsibility which now rested upon him? He must co-operate with God in carrying out the divine plan concerning Judah and the nations round about. Predestination, while it turns the will of man in a God-ward direction, does not altogether destroy the ethical factor, which asserts itself here, by way of reaction, to the extent of calling in question the appropriateness and fitness of the divine call.

Indeed, Jeremiah did not at once accept the call. The seeming hopelessness of his prophetic mission to an alienated people, coupled as it was at this critical juncture, with a world-wide mission, was too much for the timid young man. He was seized with an instinctive fear of the malicious opposition which he would have to encounter. Part of his pain was occasioned by the thought that he would have to contend, among other things, against the corrupt priests and the false prophets of his day. He was a man of peace, and to be a prophet to the nations, to

harden his brow like flint against his own kinsmen and the people of Judah, and to preach unpleasant truths when he would fain speak peace, was an alarming prospect. He shrank from the open assumption of the prophetic office under such trying circumstances, and therefore pleads his youthful inexperience and consequent unfitness for the work to which he has been called. Lacking, as he does, the necessary subject-matter for the discourses of a prophet, it would be folly for him to stand up among his fellowmen as the representative and spokesman of God. He feels that if he is to speak for God he must have something worth saying, for every messenger must have a message. "Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold, I know not how to speak, for I am but a youth." Jeremiah may at this time have been about eighteen or twenty years of age. But the youth must learn how to lose himself in his message. "And Jehovah said unto me, Say not I am but a youth, for to whomsoever I send thee, thou shalt go, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak." Let no man despise his youth, not even in oriental society, where a young man could not hope to command the same respect in public that would be accorded to a man of maturer years. What further authority is needed for the proclamation of God's will than the divine command itself? Why be afraid of the adversary when it would be far more perilous to disobey the Almighty? The best cure for the fear of man is the fear of God. He will help him in the discharge of present duty. "Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Jehovah. . . . Gird up thy loins and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee; be not afraid of their faces, lest I make thee afraid before them."

To silence the doubts and the misgivings of the wavering youth with regard to the subject-matter of his prophetic utterances, "Jehovah put forth His hand and

touched my mouth and said unto me, Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth. See, I have this day appointed thee to be a prophet over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to overturn; to build and to plant." He is to preach, not the chaff of human wisdom, but the revealed Word of God, and the ideas which he is to express shall be inspired from on high. The authority vested in him is not that of the secular arm. To the exponent of God's world-plan there is committed the power of divine truth and of those fundamental ethical principles without which nothing can endure. God's Word is more lasting and powerful in its effects than brute force. This power may have both a destructive and a constructive effect, as the above passage clearly indicates. Jeremiah is "to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to overturn." The metaphors employed are borrowed from botany and architecture, the nations and the governments being likened now to trees and now to buildings. In the case of Judah the root evil of the time is idolatry, which must be eradicated. This cannot be accomplished by a reformation of public worship. Josiah may remove the stocks and stones and demolish the carven and molten images, but the heart will continue to worship "the old patron saint." He may level to the ground the high places in the land and centralize public worship in Jerusalem without being able to change the idolatrous tendency of the inner sanctuary of the individual worshipper. This only the Word of God can do by regenerating the heart. There is no other cure. Idolatrous buildings and institutions must not only be pulled down; the very foundation stones must be overturned and completely destroyed. There is but one weapon, one blasting instrument, that will avail, and that is the Word of God. "Is not My Word like as a fire? saith Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (23:29).

The destructive character of the divine judgments, placed in the prophet's mouth, is said to resemble the devouring action of fire, when brought into contact with dry timber. "Surely they have acted very faithlessly towards Me, both the house of Israel and the house of Judah, saith Jehovah. They have denied Jehovah; They have said, He will not do it; therefore calamity shall not overtake us, neither shall we see sword nor famine. Wherefore thus saith Jehovah, Because ye speak this word, Behold I will make My words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them" (5:11, 12, 14).

The destructive aspect of God's Word applies not only to Israel but to all nations as well. Idolatrous institutions everywhere will ultimately be overthrown. The flash of a fuller revelation will one day consume them like so much combustible material. When that time comes heathen idols will be piled on a heap, and devoured by the fire of the Holy Ghost. The bulwarks of heathenism cannot stand, when once the dynamite of God's Word is applied to the tottering foundations of outworn fancies. But these external changes must be preceded by an inward transformation of the desires and the aspirations of the human heart. Every form of unrighteousness must come under the condemnation of the Lord of Hosts. The universe is built on righteous foundations. How can any nation build contrary to the divine plan without exposing that structure to the destructive influences of the physical and spiritual laws of a well-governed universe? In the realm of the spiritual, divine forgiveness is conditioned upon repentance and a desire to do God's will. "If once I speak respecting a nation, and respecting a kingdom to root out and to pull down and to destroy, and that nation turn from its wickedness, respecting which I spake, then I will repent of the calamity which I intended to inflict upon it. And it shall come to pass that as I have acted vigi-

lantly with respect to them to root out and to pull down, and to overturn and to destroy and to afflict, so I will act vigilantly with respect to them, to build and to plant, saith Jehovah. . . . And, if again I speak respecting a nation and respecting a kingdom, to build and to plant, and it do that which is wicked in My sight, not obeying My voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I promised to benefit the same" (18:7-8; 31:28; 18:9-10). The prophet is made to realize that the words, which he is authorized to declare, concerning the overthrow or restoration of Israel and of the nations in general, according as they should persist in or repent of their sins would be fulfilled with all the necessity of a divine law. God's Word will accomplish its purpose, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud; and yieldeth seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word become, that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:10).

How comforting to Jeremiah must have been the thought that the destructive effect of the Word was not an end in itself but a means to an end. The rank shoots of idolatry, of religious formalism, and of stiff-necked apostasy must be uprooted; the encumbered ground had to be cleared of all obstructions before true piety could take root in men's hearts. To accomplish that, the tree which God had planted in the national soil would have to be uprooted, pulled down and carried into exile. Meanwhile it was incumbent upon Jeremiah not only to prepare men's minds for that inglorious event but to build and to plant, and to bend to the task of laying the foundations for a better and higher future. He is firmly convinced that the proclamation of unpleasant tidings would bring upon his head the maledictions of high and low, but God now as-

sures him of His unfailing presence, and his shrinking timidity is converted into the invincible strength of an impregnable fortress and of a heart of steel. "Behold, I make thee this day a fortified city, and a pillar of iron, and a wall of brass against the whole land; against the kings of Judah and against her princes, against her priests and against the people of the land. They may fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee, for I am with thee, saith Jehovah, to deliver thee." His fears were abundantly justified by forty years of bitter opposition and cruel persecution. As the bearer of an unwelcome message he was exposed to constant reproach and to the peril of death. At times he felt like withdrawing from the arena of public life into which he had been thrust by an irresistible impulse. But he is impelled to unburden himself of the message which involuntarily leaps into prophetic utterance. "Thou didst persuade me, O Jehovah, and I was persuaded; Thou wast stronger than I and didst prevail. Day after day the work of Jehovah was made a reproach unto me and a derision. And I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name; but there was in my heart as it were a burning fire, shut up in my bones, and I laboured to contain myself, but I could not" (20:7, 8, 9). Nevertheless, his faith in God is such that he immediately expresses his confidence in the divine protection, "But Jehovah will be with me as a formidable hero, therefore shall my persecutors stumble and not prevail" (20:11). Thus strengthened, he perseveres to the very last in the path of duty with remarkable bravery and heroism. One source of strength was his intimate fellowship and communion with God. And Jehovah gave him His word. On this the prophet fed and took fresh courage, "Thy words were found and I did eat them; and Thy word became to me the joy and gladness of my heart" (15:16).

You must expect to encounter opposition as soon as you attempt, on the strength of God's Word, to assail hollow formality and vested interests, thriving on the very thing you are condemning. But be not afraid of their faces, if the prophetic word is beating in your breast like an iron hammer which cannot be silenced. Be faithful to the message which has been communicated to you. Be true to your commission, for the message which you have received is not your own property; it belongs to others and you are merely the messenger. Be ever mindful of the great dignity of your office. There is committed to your trust the golden casket of divine truth. It is the greatest dynamic in all the world. Viewed from its ultimate effects, it is the height of folly to oppose it without coming under its destructive influence. It is the hammer that smiteth in pieces life's Gibraltars. Learn to wield this weapon in keeping with the twofold purpose for which it was placed in your mouth. It will destroy the object that opposes it but wherever it is free to do a constructive work a wonderful change is wrought in the human heart; man becomes a new creature, for the mainsprings of life and of human actions are renewed. To work this miracle the encumbered ground must first be cleared of the rank undergrowth of poisonous plants; these must be uprooted and destroyed before the seed of divine truth can take firm root. The modern prophet no less than Jeremiah of old, faces the task of renewing society, not by political, social, or ecclesiastical reforms, however desirable these may be in themselves, but by a change of heart. A change in the mode of worship may leave untouched the strongholds of idolatry in the human heart. Many nominal Christians, while outwardly conforming to correct standards of worship may still retain a heart wedded to their own selfish purposes and to the idolatrous materialism of the age. To pull down the strongholds of idolatry, and to content one-

self with an outward propriety, is not enough. A reformation that does not include a fundamental regeneration of the whole man defeats itself because it fails to reform. The old evils persist in a modified form. The only hope of eradicating them lies in the destructive and constructive process of the Word of God. Knowing that some things must be destroyed and intuitively conscious of the sinful bias of men's hearts and minds, many a prospective Jeremiah naturally recoils, when called, from the course indicated.

But, my friends, have we a right to excuse ourselves from prophesying or preaching the Word on the ground of youthful inexperience? Remember that you are part of God's plan of salvation and that Jehovah still selects for the work of the ministry His Jeremiahs long before they are born. Before birth, in the secret laboratory of nature, God distributes in some mysterious way, prophetic gifts to many souls still unborn. Consequently He has a right to come to many young men and say, " Say not I am a youth, for to whomsoever I send thee, thou shalt go, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak." Remember that you are God's property, and that His gifts are not yours to keep for yourself; the prophetic gift only grows by using it in the service of others. Perhaps you are not conscious of any ability in this direction, and your heart sinks in dismay at the first promptings of the voice of conscience, suggesting the ministry as your vocation in life. Surely you will not deny that God has given to every man at least one talent; to some He has given as high as five or ten talents. " Stir up the gift that is in you," and you will discover by degrees what is the share which has fallen to you. The gift may lie dormant because you have not as yet learned the lesson which Jesus taught in the parable of the talents. Your talents will increase and multiply if you do not bury them in the soil of your sordid

desires, and thus defeat the very purpose for which they were given you. If you are perfectly honest and sincere, you will discover ere long that the still small voice within you does not persist in calling you to the work of the ministry unless there is a good reason for it. Ah, my friend, does it not suggest the thought that possibly you are one of those predestined souls of which I have spoken? If so, do not continue to think of your disqualifications for the Christian ministry, for "our sufficiency is of God" (II Cor. 3:5). Let the Word of God be your daily food, and the subject-matter for your future sermonic discourses will not fail you. "Thy words were found and I did eat them, and Thy word was unto me the joy and gladness of my heart" (Jer. 15:16).

Whatever else you may study and do as a prospective preacher remember that you are to be a man of the Word. Therefore, know the Word, feed upon it, study it, meditate upon it, assimilate it and make it your own. Then the message which you are to deliver to the hardened sinners of our own time will be like the hammer strokes of a mighty conviction, reinforced by the spiritual laws of divine omnipotence. However violent the antagonism, you may rest assured that God's Word will accomplish its object; either it will destroy the opposition of evil hearts even to the undoing of the wicked themselves, or effect a work of grace. Some good will come of your preaching. How righteous and divine, how regal and powerful is the Word of God! "The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). It is the sword of the Spirit which is stronger than the sword of the warrior, for "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (II Cor.

10:4). Though seemingly the frailest of weapons, it is the most powerful. Words have overturned and outlived dynasties and kingdoms, and institutions. Where are the powerful armies that terrified the hearts of men, when Isaiah and Jeremiah uttered and committed to writing their immortal words? Where is Babylon the mighty, what has become of proud Nineveh, what has become of the empire of the Pharaohs in the land of the Sphinx, where is Memphis, and ancient Rome? Visible kingdoms built on the receding sands of earthly might and prowess cannot endure. When Israel and Judah lost sight of the foundation upon which the Hebrew theocracy was built, and began to build on other foundations, the two kingdoms virtually pronounced their own doom. Isaiah and Jeremiah have immortalized that failure in words which still instruct the world. These prophetic gems of divine truth will never die, because they deserve to live. This much has been definitely fixed by an immutable law of God's universe.

Ultimately God's will must be done in spite of all that wicked men can do to Jeremiah. The vain babblings and maledictions of a tumultuous people cannot restrain God's servant from the exercise of his ministry. Though they lay violent hands upon him he will not, he cannot, swerve from his purpose. He has recourse to a communion and a fellowship which they know not of; the door to the Father's presence is ever open. Thus strengthened by prayer, he is invincible; for God is with him. With this glorious champion and mighty hero by his side, he will persevere in the path of duty, knowing that victory will be his in the end. Although he finds it exceedingly hard to preach his glorious message, no man ever faced difficulties with braver resolution than this suffering servant of Jehovah. He might have remained in the priestly community of Anathoth, and continued to live on the comfortable

stipends of the tribe of Levi. In Judah it was a time of peace and prosperity. Why not leave good enough alone? So argued the priests at Anathoth and in Jerusalem; so argued the flattering false prophets who prophesied for gain; this, too, was the opinion of the worshipping multitudes in Jerusalem, who in the previous year had peacefully submitted to the restoration of Jehovah-worship in the temple. The ritualists of Judah could not understand how even a prophet could cast to the four winds every earthly consideration for the sake of conscience. The man who had been providentially called to a prophetic ministry could not but prophesy. The divine mandate had converted him into a well-fortified city, an iron pillar and a brazen wall. There he stood like a Gibraltar. Man was never more conscientious in the performance of duty. Jeremiah was not a man of outstanding genius who startled the world by the possession of extraordinary gifts. In most things he stood on a level with ordinary men. But he used whatever gifts God had given him to the best advantage. With God's help he did the best he could and herein lies the secret of his greatness.

Let every prospective Jeremiah learn the lesson that while some young men are apt to be over-confident, yea, self-confident, a man may contract the irreligious habit of measuring everything by his own slender resources and of cowering in abject fear before the divinely imposed task of a prophetic ministry. The consciousness of one's inability is not a correct index to the possibilities which lie before us. Self-consciousness of an exaggerated type is deceiving; it is cowardly, and betrays a lack of faith in God. There is such a thing as distrusting God's strength. We must be less conscious of self and more conscious of God. The man who becomes a great preacher is not the man who is always thinking of himself; it is the man who learns to concentrate his thoughts and aspirations on God

and His message. Brother, whatever may be your doubts and perplexities, your silent questionings and misgivings, God is able to meet them all in the same manner in which He met the reluctance of men like Moses and Jeremiah, when He appeared to them in a vision, calling upon them to enter the ministry. God's answer to Jeremiah will suffice for your needs as well. You are to be God's spokesman declaring the Word of divine truth to a sinful world. God speaks to men through human speech; even "the Word" (John 1:1-14) was made flesh that the Man of Galilee might speak to man. Why hesitate and argue, when God puts into your mouth His written and revealed Word, which is the greatest power in the universe? Learn to wield that weapon in keeping with its twofold purpose of pulling down and building up. The same mighty hammer that smiteth the rock in pieces is used in building up the walls of Zion. That Word will outlive the kings and empires of this world. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away" (Mark 13:31).

Briefly summarized, the call-experience of Jeremiah presents to us a diffident youth shrinking from the assumption of a difficult task. Though richly endowed, both by nature and by providence, for his prophetic work, he pleads his youthful inexperience as a disqualification for service. There is abundant justification for thinking that the prophetic consciousness alone is not sufficient for such a task. If Jeremiah is to speak for God, he must have a message. Once assured that the subject-matter of his prophetic utterances would not be lacking in his case, he undertakes his perilous and heroic mission.

## VIII

## THE CALL OF EZEKIEL

### Ezekiel 1-3

EZEKIEL, a younger contemporary of Jeremiah, also came of a priestly family. He spent his boyhood amid the exciting scenes of Josiah's iconoclastic reformation, which failed to accomplish any lasting good, because it was aimed at the externals of religion. While preparing himself for the priesthood at Jerusalem the youthful son of Buzi must have heard of the prophet of Anathoth, who made a heroic attempt to avert the coming national disaster by an appeal to men's hearts, inasmuch as a callous nation could be saved by nothing short of a radical change of heart. But this much-hoped-for spiritual regeneration with its far-reaching and beneficent effects upon the national life did not materialize.

The sins of Israel in Ezekiel's day are practically the same as those found in earlier prophetic literature. Idolatrous practices and revolting heathen rites, copied from the abominations of all the nations from Egypt to Assyria, vied with the worship of Israel's covenant God, Jehovah. Even the temple precinct itself is polluted by idols. Seventy of the chief men of Judah are seen by the prophet, offering incense to pictures of animals and reptiles portrayed on the walls of the temple. Near the north gate a company of women is seated on the ground weeping for Tammuz, the supposed God of the spring vegetation, whose death is bewailed when the powerful summer sun causes the herbs to wither. While this rite was in prog-

ress, a group of twenty-five men is seen, standing in the very entrance of the temple and worshipping the rising sun. Similar rites are to be found in the whole land. The nation has broken its covenant with Jehovah. Apostasy, such as this, has vitiated its history from the beginning, the tendency toward idolatry being never wholly lacking.

On the social side, the idol-mad inhabitants of Jerusalem and of Judah are guilty of immorality, disobedience to parents, bribery, oppression, extortion, injustice, murder, and of many other forms of wickedness. These in general are condemned by the prophet, who insists upon the practice of the opposite virtues. (Chap. 18.)

Politically, Judah is fast approaching the brink of national extinction. The reign of Josiah's successors was characterized by political intrigues and restless plotting against Assyria. Foreign alliances are most detestable to Jehovah, since they are an evidence of a lack of faith in the theocratic head of the state. But the work of these faithless politicians will count for naught. In the year 597 B. C. the Assyrian army, the rod of God's punitive anger, descended on Jerusalem and put an end to the inglorious and treacherous reign of Jehoiachin, deporting him, along with ten thousand of the most prominent people, among them Ezekiel, to Babylonia, where they engaged in agriculture along one or more of the irrigating canals of the Euphrates River.. Ezekiel, for example, spent the greater part of his prophetic activity (593-571 B. C.) in a Jewish settlement at Tell-Abib near the Chebar-canal in the vicinity of Nippur. It was in the fifth year of the exile of the leading citizens of Jerusalem, or seven years before the destruction of Judah's capital (586 B. C.) that Ezekiel received his prophetic call.

This call came to him, as in the case of Isaiah and others, in the form of a vision, which is described at great

length in chapters 1-3. We must think of Ezekiel as having left the village in which he dwelt and going forth to the banks of the canal, already mentioned, when suddenly "The heavens were opened and I saw visions of God." He beheld a whirlwind approaching from the north, surrounded by brightness, and continually flashing forth in glory. Out of the storm cloud four composite creatures appear, each with four faces and four wings, and all moving harmoniously together. Each of the cherubim had four different faces, on the right side that of a man and that of a lion, representing divine intelligence and power; on the left that of an eagle, suggestive of the penetrating vision of divine omniscience and providence, and that of a bull, typical of the creative might of God. Their feet resembled those of quadrupeds and their wings were like those of huge birds with human hands beneath them. The cherubim are a part of the throne-chariot of the Almighty, resting on wonderful wheels full of eyes, whose motion is in perfect harmony with that of the cherubim, for one and the same spirit actuated both. The living creatures, or cherubim, supported on their heads a firmament, and on this expanse is a throne, the occupant of which was Jehovah Himself. The dazzling brilliance of Jehovah's glory so overpowered the awe-struck beholder that he fell powerless to the ground, and the voice of the Lord came to him and gave him a message of mourning, lamentation and woe to the rebellious house of Israel. "And when I saw it, I fell upon my face and I heard a voice saying unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet and I will speak unto thee." With the words came power to obey them. "And the spirit entered into me when He spoke unto me and set me upon my feet. And He said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, and thou shalt speak My words unto them, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, for they are rebellious." His message

is delivered to him in the form of a book, containing all of Jehovah's words, and in materialistic symbolism the prophet of the exile becomes conscious of his inspiration by eating the inscribed roll which was handed to him. That the roll was eaten implies that he was to make God's message his own by inwardly digesting and assimilating it, so that it would become a part of his very life. As it was not for a true prophet to choose his message, Ezekiel did eat the book and, although it was full of lamentation and woe, found the bitter message in his mouth sweet as honey, because the things written were from Jehovah, whose bitter word was sweet.

This, too, was the experience of Jeremiah, who had said some years before, "Thy words were found and I did eat them, and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart, for I am called by Thy name, Jehovah God of Hosts" (15:16). While the Word of God was sweet to Ezekiel because of its divine origin, it was also bitter to him because of his love for Israel. "I went in bitterness and the hand of Jehovah was strong upon me." But he must expect opposition and antagonism, for they are a brazen-faced and disobedient people, separated from God by a moral and spiritual barrier far more formidable than that caused by a foreign language. He is told that if he had been sent to any of the barbarous nations with whose language he was unacquainted, they would have hearkened unto him. In spite of it all he must be loyal to the Word of the Lord. He must be prepared to meet the insolence of a defiant people with a forehead strong as an adamant and harder than flint. The feeling of authoritativeness on the part of the prophet is based on a "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah!" Hereupon the vision leaves him, and he returns to the exiles at Tell-Abib. Utterly overwhelmed by his recent experience, for seven long days he sat among them in unbroken silence.

At the end of this period he is commissioned to be a watchman with the care of individual souls. Like the watchman on the city wall, he is to stand upon the watch-tower of his superior spiritual vision and warn every traveller of the approaching enemy, lest they fall into the hands of the enemy and perish. But if he neglects his duty and fails to give the alarm so that the traveller may make haste and find refuge within the city gate, then the watchman will be answerable for the death of every one committed to his care. The word of the Lord came to Ezekiel, saying, "Son of man, I have appointed thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore hear the word from My mouth and warn them for Me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him no warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, so that he may save his life, that wicked man shall die for his sin; but his blood will I demand from thee. But if thou warn the wicked and he turn not from his wickedness and his evil way, he will surely die for his sin, but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, if a righteous man fall from his righteousness and commits iniquity and he die; if thou hast not given him warning, he shall die for his sin and his righteous deeds will be forgotten, but his blood will I demand from thee. But if thou warn the righteous to keep from sin and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he has been warned, also thou hast delivered thy soul."

God's prophetic watchman must warn the exiles of the just consequences of their acts. If any of them perished unwarned, he would be personally liable for the death of the impenitent, because he was in a better position than they to scan the horizon of the spiritual life and better able to discern the signs of the times in order to ascertain, under given conditions, what would happen in the future with all the inevitableness of a fixed, divine law. They

must be taught to learn the inseparable connection between righteousness and life, between unrighteousness and death. He must bear witness to the truth and not permit the wicked to go on in his wickedness or the righteous to fall from his righteousness. In no other way can a spiritual watchman save his own life from the judgments of the wrath to come. He must do his duty without faltering, without fear or favour. Woe to the sentinel on the watch-tower who fails to give the signal at the approach of the enemy! May he cry out, as becometh a true watchman, and sound a timely warning to the pilgrims of earth. Let him attend to his duty and keep his eyes open, so that he may see the dust-cloud on the horizon of their lives; as we have it in Jeremiah 6: 27, "I have placed thee on the look-out among My people as a fortress that thou mayest know and search their ways."

To Ezekiel, the inaugural vision that preceded his call was an objective reality, just as real as the sight of a physical phenomenon. In describing that vision, Ezekiel, of course, like all the prophets, has his own literary style. Each has his characteristic qualities of mind and temperament as water takes the tint of the rocky bed over which it runs. But that does not affect the efficacy of the message itself, for the prophet is a channel of divine revelation through which the waters of life may flow without losing any of their life-giving qualities. For, after all, revelation is a translation of the thought of heaven into the language of earth. God deals with man through the instrumentality of man and speaks to man in a language which he can understand. The rain from above descends upon the earth, gradually sinks through the porous soil, and eventually finds its way to the fountain whence it springs. Now, although gushing forth from the bowels of the earth, that water is not "of the earth, earthy," any more than the revealed will of God, which is conveyed to

man through human agency. Earth's deepest springs owe their treasures to the skies. The ultimate source of divine revelation is the fountain-head of living waters.

Ezekiel, like the great apostle to the Gentiles, speaks of a heavenly vision. He says, "The heavens were opened and I saw visions of God." To him, God was a present spiritual reality. There is a spiritual universe which must be reckoned with by every prospective prophet of the Lord, if he would speak authoritatively for God. He may speak of facts in the spiritual realm, just as surely and confidently as the scientist does in the limited sphere of natural phenomena. The prophet must have a spiritual vision. He must be a seer, capable of seeing some aspect of the Infinite One. It is not enough for the ministerial candidate to be born in a parsonage or manse. Spiritual vision constitutes an essential part of his education. That Ezekiel was the son of a priest by no means implied that he was endowed forthwith to be the great prophet of the exile. Not that we would for one moment minimize the cultural advantages of an environment like his, but we do assert most emphatically that natural qualifications and educational advantages, however important they may be in themselves, must be supplemented by visions of God. Of all men, those who minister to others in spiritual things must first ascend the mountain-top of a great spiritual experience before they are qualified to minister to men's deepest needs. The prophetic gift comes to a man as soon as he begins to see with the eye of the soul the spiritual values of life. Only then will the divine Sovereign of all the earth loom up on the spiritual horizon of our life as an objective reality. Then only will we be able to pierce the very skies with the eagle-eye of faith, the veil of physical phenomena will be drawn aside, and we will behold the glory of earth's divine Sovereign seated upon the throne of all the universe. God cannot be discovered by human

skill and ingenuity. He is revealed to the man with a spiritual capacity, to the man who can see with the eye of faith. It was a great moment in Ezekiel's life when it dawned upon his consciousness that God was about to reveal Himself to him. The spiritual meaning of that vision could not be seen with the naked eye or grasped with the physical senses. That deeper meaning of the vision could only unfold itself to an enlarging faith.

When did the vision come? The prophet's inaugural vision came to him on the banks of a Euphrates canal dug through the alluvial plains of Babylonia. He was a Babylonian captive, a prisoner of war, if you please, and therefore best qualified to minister to the spiritual needs of his fellow countrymen, because he experimentally knows their sorrows. He was one of those ten thousand exiles from the land of Judah, whom God had sent into exile for their own good. This catastrophic and crushing experience was to work together for good to them that have eyes to see the purport and meaning of deprivation and suffering incidental to the solitude and quiet of exilic pursuits. The advantages of the captivity far outweigh the stern discipline of adversity and of national isolation. The glorious visions of this captive prophet alone are worth the captivity. Though a captive himself, he was the freest man in all that sad, dejected multitude, because he was spiritually free to walk in realms not subject to the passing whims of a political conqueror. The captivity, moreover, meant the end of the old religious nationalism. The Hebrew exiles now realized as never before that God's sway extended even to Babylonia, and that He was the God of all the universe. Not that this truth was entirely new, but to the consciousness of the exiles it had never become so real as now. They were to learn the practical truth that God's sphere of activity was not to be confined to the land of promise, but that all nations were to be included in God's all-

embracing plan of salvation and that they, as members of the chosen race, must ultimately go forth to all the world as the missionaries of a world-conquering God.

What was it that Ezekiel saw? He saw the almighty Sovereign sitting upon the throne of the universe and ruling all things according to His will. God is supreme; He is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. Nothing escapes the all-seeing eye of God's active sovereignty. What folly, therefore, for men to attempt to legislate earth's active Sovereign out of His universe by the supposed immutability of the laws of nature! Let us beware of the would-be scientist who is prone to take a negative attitude toward religion, because of an exaggeration on his part of the findings of the physical sciences. A vision of the spiritual Sovereign of the universe presupposes some spiritual capacity to which God may reveal Himself. Only to a spiritually-minded man can God become an ever-present fact, for the God-consciousness is a fact of religious experience and in no wise dependent upon the chemical reaction of the testing tube or of the crucible.

What we need in our own day is a vision of the enthroned divine Sovereign. Only too often is the active sovereignty of God lost sight of, particularly by college-bred men and women, who make entirely too much of secondary causes, so that little or no room is found in their thinking for a sovereign Deity. Others are too busy with their own selfish plans and ambitions ever to think of the sovereign claims of God upon the lives of His subjects. They do not know what it means to be conscious of God's presence, nor have they ever developed anything like a social consciousness. Not so Ezekiel. To him a vision of the divine Sovereign involves certain practical implications which he cannot escape. If God is his Sovereign it follows that he must obey the divine will; he cannot do otherwise, for to receive a command from God was at once to

perform it. What would happen if men and women of today were to draw the same conclusion? The kingdom of God would come with irresistible power because it would be ushered in by the omnipotence of the world's great Sovereign at the head of an army of loyal and obedient subjects. If we took the divine command in all seriousness there would be no dearth of men for the ministry, for every young Ezekiel would rush to the colours of our great Sovereign, exclaiming, "Speak, Lord, and I will obey instantly! Ah, Lord, Thou hast spoken by prophets and apostles and most emphatically by Him who was obedient unto death. No longer will I be disobedient to the heavenly vision. Henceforth Thy word of command shall be the law of my life. Thy will shall be my will." We need to recover the sense of God's sovereignty, so that it may become a potent force in our lives, governing our aspirations and motives and bringing into complete subjection our will to the will of Him that sitteth upon the throne of the universe.

To our prophet, God is the one great outstanding fact of the universe. He is no absentee God, who remains untouched by the crushing experiences and heart-pangs of the Hebrew exiles, but an ever-present, a living, working, all-powerful God, actively engaged in directing, overruling and shaping the affairs of nations and of men. The course of human history is determined by His sovereign will. That part of the nation is in exile is no proof of the weakness of Jehovah and of His inability to help a small hard-pressed minority against the overwhelming odds of the Assyrian army. The fortunes of the nation are intimately bound up with God's definite plan and purpose. The exile is the result of rebellion against God and of a wilful breach of the covenant. The Assyrian is the rod of God's punitive anger. The Hebrews are about to reap what they had sown. Under the circumstances, the approaching doom of

the Judæan remnant is inevitable. Six years after the call of Ezekiel the nation ceased to exist and the temple was in ruins. The fulfilment of this part of the historical process had been expected by the prophet, because he had foreseen it from the very beginning of his ministry. And he now bends his energy to the task of reconstruction. There is disclosed to his prophetic gaze a restoration program of most magnificent proportions, in which God is to be all in all. In the ideal commonwealth of the future the blessed truth of the sovereignty of God is to be vitalized and restored to its rightful place in the practical affairs of everyday life. The exiles have yet to learn the practical truth that God rules and governs the world and not Assyria. Israel's ultimate destiny is not at the mercy of a big military machine. The arm of flesh, in the long run, cannot prevail against a sovereign Deity. We want a new grip on this mighty fact, for the whole world seems to be subscribing to the atheism of force, whether military or economic. In spite of the many war-slogans that were used and the claims that were made by certain prophets that the principle of force could be destroyed by a resort to arms, the world in which we live is still, even after the Great War, the same old world at heart with all its selfishness, greed, covetousness, petty jealousy and hatred.

There is no room for God in the reconstruction program of our leading politicians. It is worth noting that in Ezekiel's restoration program God is the pivotal centre, around which everything revolves. He is the very heart and core of it, the one great controlling factor without whom there can be no adequate program of any kind. In the reconstruction program drawn up more recently God is conspicuously absent. It contains numerous economic clauses, but it certainly cannot be said to be theocentric, as was that document which was drawn up twenty-five hundred years ago by a prophet who saw deeper than our

modern economists with their economic panaceas for the ills of society. There is much to dishearten us, and the man who looks out on the world with its scheming exponents of pagan politics, its armies and fleets all ready at the first signal to deal out death and destruction, might well despair, were it not for the conviction that the divine Sovereign is still on His throne, and that if the onward march of history is impeded and interrupted by the madness and blindness of men, He will know how to bring His government of the world to a glorious consummation.

Ezekiel, in his inaugural vision, also sees the roll of a book which he is commanded to eat. "Open thy mouth and eat that I give thee. And when I looked, behold, a hand was sent unto me; and lo, a roll of a book was therein; and He spread it before me; and it was written within and without." Of course, the eating process, here alluded to, was to be understood in a figurative sense. If the young priest is to become a prophet and preach to others, he must first of all digest the contents of that written scroll, for it goes without saying that he ought to know the message which he is to deliver. A superficial acquaintance with his message is not enough. True, the efficacy of the message is not dependent upon the worthiness of the messenger. A man may impart light to others who does not himself see or follow the light; and God in His sovereign mercy may bless others by one who is himself unblessed. But experience proves that it is what comes from the heart of the preacher that reaches the heart of his hearers. He himself must be on fire with his message, if he would set others on fire. The truth of that message must have burned itself into his very soul and become part and parcel of his spiritual life. The message itself should be not merely on his lips but in his heart. This will lend force and conviction to his words. Mere verbal knowledge of the Bible will not suffice. The

preacher may study the meaning of texts, he may delight in historical and geographical allusions and show an archæological interest in the people of the Book, and yet his soul and the souls of his hearers may starve for want of that spiritual food which can be found only by inward assimilation and appropriation. All these literary helps and sidelights must be vitalized and energized by the sunlight of a heart-experience of religion, supplemented by the maturing process of meditation and by a sincere and earnest endeavour to apply in one's every-day life the burning truths which have taken possession of the inner man. The prospective preacher must receive, learn, inwardly digest, appropriate the truth and embody it in his life, so that he may become a true "living epistle, known and read of all men."

He ought to be a man of the Book. God pity the man who finds the task of preparation irksome. The words of the written scroll, we are told, were pleasant to the prophet's taste. We, too, if we do not already possess it, need to develop a taste for the Book of books. The mentally inert have no idea what rare delights they are missing by feeding upon the husks of literature, when they might sit down with the prophets and apostles to a royal feast prepared in honour of the King's Son. What a noble company! These prophets and apostles have made an infinitely greater contribution to the world's progress than all the philosophers and scientists put together. To live in their companionship and learn to see their visions is a rare privilege indeed. The Bible opens up to us an inexhaustible library of the finest and richest literature in the world. Think of the scope and immensity of its themes! Think of the intellectual, moral and spiritual stimulus that is to be found in dealing with such majestic themes as God and man, sin and salvation, the means of grace, the Church, the ministry, a world-embracing brotherhood of Christian be-

lievers, the immortality of the soul, things present and things to come. What can compare with the range of thought to which the ministerial student is invited? This constitutes one of the chief attractions of the ministry. The theological student preparing for the ministry may have for his daily food meat of unsurpassed sweetness and drink at the Biblical fountain which is as deep as eternity and yet so readily accessible that even a child may drink thereof and be refreshed. Here is the only effective panacea for the ills and sins of a desperately selfish race. The world will be saved, not by the economic programs of atheistic prophets, but by God and His Word alone, which emphasizes the idea of sacrificial service.

What was the effect of the vision upon the prophet? He fell upon his face in the presence of this august manifestation of the Deity. If it is true that the idea of the absolute sovereignty of God has little, if any, practical bearing upon the affairs of men and of nations, it is no less true that in our modern life we have to a large extent lost the sense of religious awe, of reverence and of godly fear. The familiarity of some with holy things borders on irreverence and flippancy in religion. It will be a great day for the Church when her youth shall have regained once more that deep and abiding sense of adoring awe and religious reverence in God's presence. If only our young people had an adequate conception of God and would think of Him not merely as a loving Father but also as the enthroned Sovereign, much might be gained for the cause of true religion. In that event, an increasing number of young Ezekiels could be found in the Church, bending the knee and humbling their proud hearts before the Almighty while awaiting His word of command. May our young men become increasingly conscious of God's greatness and majesty and of their insignificance and utter dependence upon Him. How infinitely greater is the Creator than the

creature, the duration of whose breath is entirely dependent upon the divine Potter!

How infinite, too, is the distance between divine Omnipotence and human impotence! Ezekiel had no difficulty in discovering the contrast. The vision impresses him with his own weakness and limitations. This is brought out in the oft-recurring title, employed by Jehovah in addressing the prophet. In His sovereign presence he is simply "a son of man." This term of address, it will be noted, occurs no less than one hundred and sixteen times in the book of Ezekiel and is always used by Jehovah Himself. Like Isaiah in the temple, Ezekiel is humble enough to identify himself completely with his people. He is only a fellow exile, a creature of the dust, who can do nothing great or small without that spiritual quickening which God vouchsafes to him on the plains of Babylonia.

Young man, whatever thy name, thou art "a son of man." The prophet's title applies to you also. If that is so and you possess the qualities of a normal man, you ought to show just cause why you should refuse to lend a ready ear to the prophetic call. Have you been standing idly by in the market-place, because you have never felt that inner urge which comes to a man when he begins to feel the logic of some definite phase of divine truth in its relation to a life of sacrificial service? You say, God has not been calling for workers, when men are dying by the millions for want of the gospel, and when the need for more workers is so great? What a libel upon God's character! Son of man, you must be blind to the fact that God works through sons of men, like you and me. Can you continue to excuse your shirking inertia, when the Almighty is calling you into His service? What infinite condescension on the part of God to appeal to frail mortals, like ourselves, to recruit and augment the ranks of the standard-bearers of the cross! It is no small honour to be

an active co-labourer with God. The gospel calls you. Will you bow in humility before your Maker and acknowledge His sovereign claim upon your God-given life? You are only a man, a creature of the dust, and yet, though nothing in or of yourself, God calls you. The Master hath need of you. Vast multitudes of a sin-cursed race are dying in their sins. Though every minister had the courage of an Elijah or of a John the Baptist and could preach like the divine Prophet of Nazareth; though every missionary were a St. Paul, the work of a world-wide evangelization is greater than they alone could perform. That God's kingdom may come in power, sons of men are needed in increasing numbers. Recruits must come from all ranks of society—from the house of Levi and of Aaron, from the parsonage and manse, from the farmhouse and city home, from halls of priestly learning and from the common people, from the common school, high school, college, university, and theological seminary; in a word, from all walks of life. Ministerial talent is not confined to any particular class. It often lies buried under the crust of circumstances like hidden gold and uncut diamonds in the bowels of the earth. Our task is to unearth and discover it by turning upon it the penetrating searchlight of God's truth, and thus lead to greater consecration on the part of the sons of men.

Finding in Ezekiel complete submission to the divine will, God empowers him to do the work to which he is called. Though nothing in himself, though weak and frail in comparison with his supreme Sovereign, Ezekiel is to go forth to his arduous task in the strength of the Almighty. The man who believes he is sent on a mission by divine Omnipotence is always a strong person, for he goes forth not in his own strength but in the strength of God's Word. The source of the prophet's strength is indicated by the well-known formula, "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah,"

which is used by him over a hundred times. On every occasion he is to speak in the name of the King of heaven and earth. When God sends forth a man to arduous service, He always says, "I will help thee; yea, I will strengthen thee. Speak unto them and tell them, Thus and thus saith Jehovah, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. Fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house." The battle which he is to wage is not his, but God's. And so there is imparted to the prophet the necessary courage and heroism by the transforming power of God's Word. If the Hebrew exiles show a brazen and impudent face and a callous heart, the prophet will meet their flint-like countenances with a forehead of the hardest steel, for the Word of God is sharper than any weapon forged on the anvil of a rebellious heart. Truth is mightier than error, and the strength of allied humanity is as nothing when compared with the almighty power of God. There can be no doubt about the final outcome of the struggle. What matter if, in the course of the conflict, God's ambassador should be severely put to the test by the callousness of the rebels, by unfair and malicious criticism, by opposition, threats, and open sedition! Let him be firm and unshakable, if he would be a leader of men. If he be a true and faithful watchman, let him take his stand and fortify himself in the watch-tower of divine truth, and see how the battle goes. Ere long he will discover to his utter amazement that he has found numerous allies in the consciences of many of his worst foes, for down in their heart of hearts they have a sneaking suspicion that the prophet is right, after all, for he is fighting on the side of the God of history.

The assurance that divine authority is on his side is in itself sufficient to make his face and his forehead hard as a diamond in the presence of opponents whose only authority lies in physical force or other earthly means. With

this conviction in his soul, Ezekiel could look with confidence into the future, knowing that the cause of truth and righteousness would ultimately prevail. It buoyed him up and made him strong. His name was no misnomer. It epitomizes the prophet's theology, and expresses in the clearest language what every theological student and every "watchman" needs to learn by experience, and that is, that "God strengthens." This explains Ezekiel's attitude toward divine truth in the face of the most determined opposition. He would brook no compromise with the enemy for the sake of avoiding open hostilities. If he did he would forfeit his right to be a prophet. But there is no danger, for Ezekiel is not the man to play to the galleries by proclaiming pleasant things to itching ears, nor is he afraid, like many a weak-kneed prophet of today, to apply the logic of eternal truth without fear or favour. For there is but one gospel for rich and poor alike. It is not for the prophet to change or mar the message by wilful subtractions or additions, or what is far more frequent, by glossing over certain important truths either because they are unpopular or because they might affect one or more prominent pew-holders in the church. Of course, we do not mean that a prophetic preacher should antagonize, without cause, his parishioners by being pugnacious for the sake of exemplifying the martial spirit of a fearless man. Of all men, the minister must be a man of tact, both in and out of the pulpit. A large measure of hallowed common sense will always stand him in good stead. But whatever the minister is or ought to be, he cannot afford to tamper with truth, for truth is truth, even though the heavens fall. Let him, then, be true to his vocation and preach the truth and not explain away the truth, so that it either loses its force or becomes meaningless. While he is to preach the truth in love, may he never forget that God's love is tempered by His sovereign justice. Let him re-

member that he is above all else a watchman who is to watch over souls as one who must give account unto God and sound the alarm, whenever necessary. "I have set thee for a watchman; thou shalt hear the word from My mouth and warn them for Me." What a responsibility is his! Well might he despair, were it not for the glorious fact that God is his strength. He has too keen a sense of the sovereignty of God to withhold obedience to the divine command. However difficult the task, the Word of God is a tower of strength in every emergency. It inspires the messenger and sustains him in his work. It enables the under-shepherd to feel that whilst he is keeping watch over the flock, the Shepherd of Israel is ever by his side. It is a never-failing weapon. It is a very necessary part of our spiritual equipment. Thus equipped, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." He gives power commensurate with every duty.

## IX

## THE CALL OF JONAH

### Jonah 1, 3, 4

WE now come to the call of Jonah, the first foreign missionary of the old dispensation. The birthplace of the son of Amittai is said to have been Gath-Hepher, a village in the tribe of Zebulun, about an hour's walk north of Nazareth (II Kings 14:25). Our present interest is not in the date of the book, nor are we much concerned with the theories that have been advanced with respect to its interpretation. From a practical point of view, all this is of little consequence. What we are interested in is the message of the book itself, emphasizing more particularly those features of the book which stand in some relation to the call of Jonah.

As in the case of Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah and others, no mention is made of an appearance of Jehovah. "The word of Jehovah came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their wickedness is come up before Me. But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish." The reality of the call in this case may be judged from its effect upon Jonah's conduct. It took him completely by surprise as may be seen from the suddenness of his flight. The first word he hears is "Arise." That was a summons to immediate action. He must gird up his loins and go immediately. But why this haste? Remember, Jonah, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed" (3:4). The sins of the wicked city are crying for vengeance to high heaven itself. But,

Jonah, have you no sense of direction? Why go west when you ought to go east? Surely you are not afraid to preach unpleasant truths at the command of God! A real prophet, Jonah, knows no fear. But, Jonah, why take to your heels in flight? On and on he goes down to Joppa, a Mediterranean seaport, and after paying his fare, he takes ship for the distant west, only to be overtaken by a storm and thrown into the sea by the terror-stricken sailors, where he is swallowed by a great fish which, on the third day, casts him forth uninjured upon the land. Hereupon he receives a second command to go to Nineveh. Though retaining his former prejudices, this time he obeys, because he realizes that a man cannot rebel with impunity against God's will and that it is sheer folly for anyone even to attempt to evade his divinely appointed destiny.

Jonah, unlike Ezekiel, had no overpowering sense of God's sovereignty, otherwise he would not have tried to escape the unwelcome task of preaching to a heathen people. A true prophet is a man who speaks for God unquestioningly, conscious all the while that the sovereign will of God is the ultimate reason behind every prophetic utterance. The will of God's messenger must coalesce with that of the God of heaven and earth. When a man's will has once been disciplined to prefer the divine will to his own, there is little, if any, room for fretful questioning, even in the face of an unpleasant task. Whatever may have been Jonah's theoretical beliefs, he could hardly have had, to judge from his subsequent acts, a compelling sense of the sovereign might and universal supremacy of the Author of his message. He rebels at the very thought of becoming a prophet to the Gentiles. If he had yielded self-will and said, God wills it! God wills it! he would not have endeavoured to escape from the duty divinely laid upon him. Did he prefer the wisdom of an earth-born worm to that of the Almighty? Did he say to himself,

Why go to Nineveh when Israel needed all the prophets she could get? Does not charity begin at home? When he finally did go to Nineveh, he did his work there after the manner of a man who had been driven to it by the force of outer circumstances. He did not breathe the regal atmosphere of an Isaiah, volunteering for service at the call of his sovereign Lord. Ah, yes; but there is a difference here. Isaiah was called to be a prophet to his own people and to console his contemporaries by prophesying the downfall of many of the surrounding nations. How gladly Jonah would have done that! And as it was the duty of a Hebrew prophet to include in his prophecies other nations also, what Jewish patriot would have refused to hurl his prophetic maledictions and anathemas at the hated world-power along the Tigris and Euphrates, ever threatening and assailing the independence of Jehovah's people?

But Jonah is to go and preach to Nineveh itself. That, in the prophet's mind, alters the whole situation. It is one thing to predict the fall of Nineveh while prophesying on Israelitish soil and quite another thing to go directly to Nineveh and perform the work of a prophet. The downfall of Nineveh, if predicted by a prophet who confined his activity to Israel, necessarily involved the fulfilment of the announced doom, since no prophet could be found in all the land who would be willing, for patriotic reasons, to deliver that message in person for fear that the dreaded Ninevites might repent upon hearing the message and be saved. Jonah's refusal to go to Nineveh was not due to cowardice, but to his knowledge of the merciful and compassionate nature of Jehovah, as he himself admits in the fourth chapter of the book, "Ah now, Jehovah, was not my word, when I was yet in my own country, at the time I made ready to flee to Tarshish, this that I knew that Thou art a God gracious and tender and long-suffering, plente-

ous in love and prone to forgive?" He knew from God's dealings with Israel in the past (Ex. 34:6) that this characteristic of Jehovah might assert itself with respect to Nineveh, should the inhabitants thereof repent. It was not that Jonah lacked courage, for no real prophet would shrink from a journey of several hundred miles which such a task involved. But one thing he simply could not understand, and that was, why God should be merciful to Nineveh, this proud and arrogant, this unmercifully cruel and wicked city on the banks of the Tigris. The Assyrian capital was Israel's worst foe potentially and in a very real sense. Would not the political policy of the imperial city jeopardize the very existence of Israel's religion by an attempt on the part of the conquerors to impose their gods upon the conquered races? Let Nineveh perish! Let others go to Nineveh if they like, but as for him he will not prove a traitor to his own people Israel. Blinded by a godless patriotism and by a narrow-minded, self-centred nationalism, Jonah would rather put the Mediterranean Sea between him and the fulfilment of his unwelcome task. He will do nothing to further the spiritual interests of his country's mortal enemy. His miraculous rescue from the briny deep did not in the least change his feeling in the matter. All the while he was delivering his message there was a wretched undertone of fear that God's forgiving love might transcend the national borders of Israel. Although he himself has just profited by the divine mercy, he complains when that same mercy is about to be extended to the people of Nineveh as if the sphere of God's active interest on earth had to limit itself forever to a numerically insignificant nation.

How inconsistent and unreasonable he was is shown by his attitude toward the withered gourd vine, in whose shade he had found relief from the burning rays of a scorching Assyrian sun. It was only a wild, ephemeral

plant of rapid growth with large leaves upon which he had expended no labour nor had he done anything to make it grow, and yet when it suddenly perished he was full of pity for it. And God said to Jonah, "Art thou so very angry about the gourd? And he said, I am very angry, even unto death! And Jehovah said, Thou carest for a gourd for which thou hast not laboured, nor hast thou brought it up, a thing that came up in a night and in a night has perished. And should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than twelve times ten thousand human beings who know not their right hand from their left, besides much cattle?" What a contrast between a gourd and a hundred and twenty thousand infants and herds of dumb-driven cattle! Such an argument is unanswerable. The prophet is speechless; he has learned his lesson, namely, that God, who is the Creator of all things, has compassion even on the heathen who repent of their sins. If men anywhere repent and turn from their evil ways, God will ward off the threatened punishment.

We have seen that the underlying motive for Jonah's act of disobedience sprang from his fear of the extension of God's mercy to the Ninevites. Other motives of a subordinate character may have precipitated his flight. It may be that the human equation is partly to blame for the course of events. Had he thought to himself, What would his people, what would the Ninevites, think of him, if his prophecy remained unfulfilled? For who can tell but that a merciful and compassionate God might spare the city, and thus nullify the prophet's message? Was he of the opinion that the event which he predicted ought to come to pass, if he was not to return to Israel a discredited prophet? Did he really think that the divine law ought to be analogous to the laws of the Medes and Persians? If so, he failed to realize that prophecy is conditional, and that a threatened destruction can be averted by repentance

without in any wise reflecting upon the prophet's reputation. It would be most humiliating to think that the question of one's reputation as a prophet could stand in the way of men's salvation, or that any man could be so self-centred as to desire the destruction of heathen multitudes as a credential of his prophetic office. We rather prefer to think that Jonah's disinclination to preach to the Ninevites had its origin in national prejudices and narrow religious sympathies relative to Israel's prophetic mission to all nations. As a Hebrew patriot he did not like the task of becoming a foreign missionary to Nineveh, the proud mistress of the world. But, as previously remarked, he finally went under compulsion, fully expecting the literal fulfilment of his prophecy.

And so Jonah, the patriot, sat down outside the city in order to witness the destruction of the Assyrian capital. Seeing the city spared, he is extremely displeased at the seeming failure of his mission. But had he really failed? The people of Nineveh, we are told, believed God and repented in sackcloth and ashes. Poor man that he was to be blind to the fact that he was to see the highest success of his preaching, not in the earthquake or the political overthrow of the city, but in the destruction of the city's accumulated wickedness by the fires of a repentance which had been kindled on the altar of a living faith! The success of his mission to Nineveh is to be measured by the moral effect which his predictions had produced upon the hearts and minds of his hearers. A city might be laid waste by an earthquake or by a thunderbolt forged on the anvil of the elemental forces of nature, but such a physical change is not to be compared for a moment with the refining fire of the love of a merciful and gracious God which consumes the base alloy of sin. The proclamation of divine mercy is the most powerful agent in kindling this heavenly fire in the silent recesses of the soul. Sin and not

the sinner must be destroyed, for Jehovah does not desire the destruction of the nations, but rather that they should turn from their evil way and live. That this might be accomplished is the task of city and rural pastors alike.

We urbanites boast of our magnificent public works, our fine boulevards, parks and art galleries, our public buildings, palatial homes and skyscrapers, our commercial importance, our wealth, luxury, refinement and means of enjoyment, without often saying a word about the crying evils of modern city life, of its vice and unspeakable moral filth. Think of the wickedness, the untold selfishness and avarice of many a so-called model citizen, the hypocrisy and irreligion, stalking along our city streets and boulevards under the garb of respectability and lifting up its serpentine head in the slum district. This cesspool of moral filth is politely overlooked by the statistician or politician, by the rank and file of our citizenry and oh, the agony of it, by many a man who poses as a prophet, but who lacks the courage of his convictions. The city preacher of today has substantially the same charge as Jonah had. Those of us who have a conscience in the matter feel at times that there is too little of this frank and fearless treatment of moral and social corruption. If the man in the pulpit is a prophetic preacher, then let him discharge his prophetic function by crying out against every form of wickedness and warn the citizens of the ruin they are bringing upon themselves and upon their families. Languid and effeminate whispers will not wake sleeping sinners. The preacher is a watchman, crying in the night of men's sins against the religious indifference and defiant infidelity of those who seem to forget that nothing escapes God's all-seeing eye. Woe to any city in which the voice of prophecy slurs over the declaration of divine wrath upon the sin and guilt of its inhabitants. Jonah, with all his national exclusiveness and bigotry, is

to be preferred to such voices. Yes, the prophetic preacher must go into the wicked Ninevehs and Babylons both at home and abroad and tell them that they will be destroyed, unless they repent of their wickedness and live. It is well to remember, however, that the sternness of the message should in every case be tempered with heavenly mercy, so that the repentance which follows may be rooted not in fear but in love to a forgiving and gracious God.

But Jonah's task is no easy one. His path is constantly beset with difficulties and irritating perplexities. There was not only the raging tempest on the Mediterranean Sea, but there was also that withered gourd outside the city of Nineveh. One feels almost disposed to smile at the seeming anti-climax, were it not for the somewhat embarrassing discovery that the picture is true to life. To a fretful prophet, life at times becomes quite irksome, not so much in consequence of raging tempests and real hardships, but more especially on account of the disappointment and discontent that arises from mere trifles. As a matter of fact, men are powerfully affected by the withered gourds of life. How provoking to think, for example, that the work of the ministry has not made it possible for a man to lay by anything for a "rainy day," thus leaving not only himself but also the members of his family exposed to the blasting east winds of adversity or to the gushing downpour of "the latter rains." While the average business man is living in luxury, comparatively speaking, and counting his gourds by the thousands, yea, hundreds of thousands, he has to count his by the tens or hundreds. This—it might be remarked parenthetically—is one of the reasons why many young men look with disfavour on the ministry as a life calling.

Then, too, how exasperating to think that the average business man is not his intellectual equal, many of these so-called self-made men priding themselves on the fact

that they have never seen the inside of a college or even of a high school. They have been cultivating gourds and storing them away in their barns for future use, while they have been gathering souls for the garners of the heavenly kingdom. Ah, yes; all this is true, only too true. And yet, be it remembered that the prophet of today, although he still reaps a prophet's reward in comparison with the economic returns that come to other men, need not be in want of the necessaries of life, nor of a place where he may lay his head. One of the more hopeful signs of the times is that with the rise in the cost of living many of our ministers are receiving a proportionate increase in salary. Such congregations are to be highly commended. Their example is most refreshing to the prophet with his lonely gourd, which withers away from month to month; it also has a beneficent effect upon the source of our ministerial supply. It is to be hoped that other congregations, which have kept their ministers "poor and humble" all along, may develop a keener sense of stewardship, so that the wings of prophetic inspiration may not be broken by undue worriment over an insufficient income. Why should the church-goer multiply his gourds at the expense of the minister of the gospel, when the work of the latter is just as important to society, if not infinitely more important in every way, particularly as a stabilizing social, moral and religious factor.

But, brethren, we must go deeper. We must go to the heart of the matter, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. A man may count his "gourds" by the millions and yet be the unhappiest man in the world. God pity the man who flees to Tarshish for the sake of making his mark in the world and who, when he has found a place among the successful business men of Tarshish, begins to preach the "gospel of getting on," which prosperous worldlings are continually

preaching! The storm is sure to break sometime or other upon every Jonah who in early youth felt that inner urge, after the word of the Lord had come to him, to enter the ministry, but somehow he sought to evade the awful responsibility of preaching to the "Ninevites" by embarking on another career full of promise economically and socially. In his better moments he knows that he is a despicable renegade with the heart of a Judas, which is shrivelling up for want of obedience to God's will. He is one of the men who have been hiding behind the stuff during the heat of the Lord's battle in the great city. In the meantime he may have acquired great wealth, but if he has rebelled against the word of the Lord, which came to him in his youth, he has lost his soul. And what will he give to the Owner of the universe in exchange for his soul? Not so the minister of the gospel who has found the secret of real, abiding happiness in the faithful performance of his God-given duty. Let no one think that he can cultivate gourds and be happy in so doing, when there has come to him in early youth the word of the Lord to go to heathen Nineveh and preach the gospel. In that event the work of a foreign missionary is infinitely more important than that of a business man engaged, let us say, in home and foreign trade. To say that some men are better off cultivating gourds or growing potatoes than they would be in the ministry is mere quibbling. Whether a man should be a missionary is settled beyond a peradventure by the prophetic call. Potential prophets are running away from God, like Jonah; excuses for going to Tarshish may be many, valid reasons there can be none, when God calls.

What is a call to a prophetic ministry in the light of the call of Jonah? It is the call of duty from on high in the hour of need, when men's souls are perishing for want of spiritual enlightenment. How dangerous it is to disobey the divine call may be seen from the book of Jonah. God's

will must be done in the end. A man may just as well make up his mind to do it first as last. As a remedy for procrastination, learn to regard duty as the sovereign command of God. A potential prophet may go down to Joppa in the endeavour to escape his divinely appointed duty. He may go up in the scale of social and economic success, and yet morally and spiritually his act of disobedience to God may necessitate his going down to the very depths of despair. Therefore, young man, beware! Let Jonah's punishment suffice as a warning without attempting to imitate his act of rebellion against the divine mandate. So far as you are concerned, that mandate may take the form of the still small voice of conscience, speaking to a Scripture-illumined mind and heart. You need no audible voice to point out to you the path of duty at a time when millions of human beings in foreign lands are just as desperately in need of God's Word as were the ancient Ninevites.

But, alas, for modern Nineveh! God's word of command has gone forth, saying to all Christians, " Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." But there in the pew sits Jonah with a set of preconceived opinions and petty prejudices relative to the conversion of the heathen. He is one of those who begrudge the prophet's fare, not to the city of Tarshish, with its foreign trade and commercial advantages, but to heathen Nineveh. Jonah is saying, There is work to do at home, for " charity begins at home," without realizing that there is no valid reason why his much-talked-of " charity " should not exceed his provincial borders, if it is of the right sort. But for some reason, best known to himself, he is an ardent advocate of foreign trade. His slogan is, Send to them our goods,—the products of our mines and steel mills, our oil and agricultural products, but let them pay for our goods in good gold. The spirit of a cold-blooded commercialism cries out like one of old, " Why this waste! Why

send missionaries to the heathen and spend so much money for intangible results?" This attitude toward foreign missions on the part of our modern Jonahs reminds us of the spirit of the elder brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The elder brother, you will remember, looks on sullenly, because he is thinking of the commercial value of his patrimony. Since the younger brother has already received and squandered his share of the estate, the new robe, the ring, the fatted calf, in short, this feast of restoring love means so much less for him when the final division is made. Why restore the vagabond spendthrift, even though he should repent, saying, "Father, forgive!—Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned."

Israel, according to the book of Jonah, is the elder brother. The people, blinded by selfishness and national exclusiveness, were saying, Jehovah's blessings are for us. We are of the seed of Abraham; we belong to the chosen race. Ah, yes; but Israel, the elder brother, must share this spiritual heritage with the heathen, for they, too, have a capacity for religious truth, as may be seen from the repentance of the Ninevites. But for centuries the people refused to learn the lesson which the book of Jonah teaches. It was the deadly selfish spirit of the elder brother that killed whatever missionary effort may have been put forth on a large scale. The same spirit persists today. In spite of the book of the Acts and the missionary chapters that have been written in the nineteenth century, men are still saying, Why send missionaries to the ends of the earth, when there are so many heathen at home? Spend your money on your own people. Think of your own local church, make it more beautiful architecturally, think of the æsthetic stimulus to devotion; what we need is highly artistic stained-glass windows, frescoed walls, a marble pulpit, an imported altar, and nice soft cushions for our pews. No one, I am sure, will object to architec-

tural embellishments, to a beautiful church home and all that sort of thing, as long as the claims of a world-wide gospel are not overlooked. But does it ever occur to us that while many Christians are worshipping in cathedrals and beautiful church homes, the gospel is being preached to the heathen at some noisy street corner, in a mud-hut, or some barn-like structure? What a contrast our poorly equipped mission stations present in the foreign field to the gorgeous and lavishly adorned temples of the heathen gods! There is just as much reason, we think, for beautiful church buildings on the foreign field as in the homeland. The argument boils itself down to this—If the penitent prodigal is restored to sonship, why should the elder brother make a distinction? But, after all, it is not so much a question of physical equipment, of robes, rings, and fatted calves as it is of a right attitude of the heart toward our heathen brethren, whether at home or abroad. I *am* my brother's keeper. I must bring him to the Father's house, so that the Father of all mercy may cover up his sins by putting upon him heaven's own vestments—a robe of righteousness. That is my missionary obligation to the heathen.

But, unfortunately, it is the spirit of the elder brother and of the unmerciful servant that bars the approach to heaven's gate. "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst Me; shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" There is an attitude of indifference toward the perishing on the part of money-hardened and provincially-minded believers. The question of their salvation gets mixed up with their narrow provincialism of thought toward others, especially toward the heathen. Self-interest, whether on the part of the individual or of the national group, is preferred to the salvation of immortal souls. Jonah's reluctance to do the work of a foreign

missionary ought to be a warning to ourselves, who are entrusted, as he was, with a mission to heathen men. His punishment for declining to discharge that mission points with singular irony to the fate of the Hebrew nation of which he was a part. In the course of their checkered history they were taken captive by the very nations they should have captivated and conquered by the transforming power of Israel's religion.

Over us, too, as a church, over America as a nation to which God has given unprecedented resources for evangelizing the world, similar judgments may be impending unless we clearly recognize our stewardship and discharge our missionary duty to mankind. If the Christian forces of America fail to do their duty in this regard the nations of the Orient may sweep ere long like a terrible scourge not only over our own land but also over Europe. If we are in possession of the true religion, it follows that the "American melting pot" has a duty to perform in helping to evangelize the nations of the earth. Religion spells opportunity, duty, obligation; it is a trust; it is not ours to keep. Its efficacy and power increases by sharing it with others. By limiting its use to ourselves we lose it and in the end lose our own souls. In our day and age God signs no special treaty clauses with any favoured nation, for He is the God of Jew and Gentile alike. Even way back in the hoary past, God selects Israel in order that the chosen race might become the torch-bearer of salvation to the Gentile world.

The book of Jonah, then, is a plea for foreign missions. It emphasizes the universality of the divine plan of salvation and the missionary obligation of Israel to the Gentiles. It seeks to enlarge the religious sympathies of a people elected and chosen of God to carry the message of repentance to the heathen. The missionary ideas, embodied in the book, give expression to the religious idealism fre-

quently met with in other parts of the Old Testament, especially in prophetic literature. But, unfortunately, the missionary ideals of Israel's seers, prophets and spiritual teachers were reduced, for the most part, to the realm of theory. The missionary lesson, which the book of Jonah teaches, led to no practical recognition of the world-calling of a nation of potential missionaries. There is a wide gap between the call of the first foreign missionary and the Acts of the Apostles. Even Jonah was a reluctant prophet. This reluctance was even more pronounced among the rank and file in Israel. It was not until the Messianic age that Israel's prophetic mission to the world was clearly recognized. But even then the same old background of human selfishness and national exclusiveness persists in one form or another in apostolic times as well as in the subsequent history of Christianity. Judaizers were never wholly wanting. This anti-missionary party was the bane of Paul's life. Had it not been for the powerful influence of the apostle, Christianity might have been doomed to an insignificant Jewish sect. In general, Christians have been slow to obey the Great Commission. Happily, some have dared to do their full Christian duty in the face of blind opposition, others have gone forth to distant lands in response to the Macedonian call and Christ has triumphed. "Who follows in their train?"

# X

## THE CALL OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

### Luke 3: 1-18

THE fullest account of the life of John the Baptist is that of St. Luke, who is our only source for the birth-story and early training of the harbinger and herald of a new age. His prophetic call is attested both in the Old and New Testament. From the Gospel of St. Luke, as well as from the testimony of the Baptist himself, we learn that he was not merely called to be a prophet shortly before he began his public ministry, but that he was the prophesied forerunner of Jesus the Messiah. "For this is he that was spoken of by Isaiah the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." St. Mark introduces this quotation from Isaiah 40: 3 by quoting Malachi 3: 1, "Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way." St. Luke relates that the angel Gabriel, in announcing the birth of John the Baptist, connected with him another passage in Malachi. This quotation from Malachi 4: 5, 6 reads in part as follows, "He shall go before His face in the spirit and power of Elijah to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Of all the prophets, he has the sole distinction of being the subject of prophecy.

That he was to be a man of unusual historical importance is indicated by the incidents recorded in the first chapter of Luke. Like Moses, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, he sprang from a priestly family, both parents being of

Aaronic descent. The conditions under which he was born remind us of the birth of Isaac. He was a child of old age, Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth being well advanced in years. As in the case of Isaac and of Jesus, his birth is previously announced by an angel. The parents of the forerunner were a pious God-fearing pair. Finding their home unblessed, they besought the Lord for a natural heir, for who knows but what the herald of a new dispensation or even the promised Messiah might come to bless them in their loneliness, and thus remove from the heart of praying Elizabeth the stinging stigma of childlessness? They prayed earnestly and long, but to no avail. The years rolled on and the one great hope of their lives had not been realized. Judging from the contents of Luke 1:18, it appears that they had ceased to hope, when the announcement came that their prayers were to be answered at last. Addressing the officiating priest in the temple proper, the angel says, "Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord." If the answer to his prayer has been deferred to old age, it was that it might come freighted with a larger blessing. The promised offspring is to be no ordinary child. His name, which is divinely given, signifies "Jehovah is gracious," by which Zacharias is given to understand that this gracious act of divine visitation had reference not merely to a certain priestly family in the hill-country of Judæa but to the nation as a whole.

Like Samuel the prophet, he is to be a Nazirite, a word derived from a stem signifying separation, and hence complete consecration to God. Such lifelong consecration must not be marred, even for a moment, by the use of intoxicants, which might result in bodily drunkenness. It

was expected of a person thus consecrated that he abstain from wine and strong drink in general. The future significance of the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth is indicated by his spiritual equipment: "he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." In this way the herald of a new dispensation shall, in the spirit and power of an Elijah, run before the chariot of the coming Messiah and prepare His way. In the latter half of his prophetic hymn of praise, known as the Benedictus, Zacharias turns to the new-born infant and says, "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready His ways." According to St. Luke, John was born about six months before the birth of Jesus. The preliminary history of the Baptist in so far as it relates to the time between his circumcision and prophetic activity by the banks of Jordan may be summed up in two brief statements, "The hand of the Lord was with him. And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till" the divinely-appointed hour when he was to be made known to all the people as the prophet of the Most High.

Between the birth and public appearance of the Messiah's forerunner there was probably an interval of thirty years. How he was prepared for his mission during these intervening years is not stated. From the sentences just quoted we gather that the child developed physically and spiritually into a prophet like Elijah under the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is not saying that his parents had no share in the education of the growing child and maturing youth. The home influences which touched and shaped the young prophet-life were among the best in the land. We do not know how old he was when he took up his abode in the desert. The death of his aged father and mother may have furnished a suitable

opportunity. He was now a youth, perhaps, of some twenty years of age. The place of his abode was not a sandy desert or a stony waste, but a region of sparse vegetation stretching westward from the Dead Sea to the Judæan hills. This region was used, at certain seasons of the year, as a grazing ground for any sheep that might be led hither by their shepherds after the hill country of Judæa had been depastured.

His retirement to the desert is not without prophetic precedent. We all remember how the future liberator of the clans in Goshen had to retire to the solitudes of Midian, where he might develop the necessary moral and spiritual strength for the work of emancipation under the maturing influences of his new surroundings far removed from the pomp and splendour of the Egyptian court. What a contrast between the earthly splendour of the son of Pharaoh's daughter and the simple life of the shepherd of Midian! And yet he finally became, by the compelling power of a new vision of God, a prophet mighty in word and deed. We are reminded also of the herdsman of Tekoa, who raised a peculiar breed of desert sheep prized for the excellence of their wool. The wilderness of Tekoa helped to mould the life of the prophet of social justice. The book of Amos reflects the atmosphere of the same desert, which played such a large part in the early training of John the Baptist. Amos advocates the simple life in contrast to the moral and social corruptions of a degraded civilization. He felt that the comforts of civilization had been purchased at too great a cost. A pleasure-loving aristocracy might point to merry-making men and women, feasting and reclining upon couches of ivory. But what gains are these when the simplicity of better days has been supplanted by luxury and frivolity, by sensualism, revelry and base animalism? Houses of hewn stone built at the expense of the poor and filled with ill-gotten gain can

never be a substitute for social righteousness. The land-grabbing city merchants and their pleasure-mad consorts had all but lost their souls in the midst of savoury dishes, bowls filled with wine, fragrant perfumes and sensuous music. What the reeling revelers needed was the sobering atmosphere of the wilderness of Tekoa. Far better the frugality and simplicity of the region of Tekoa than the soul-destroying atmosphere of a corrupt civilization! Prophets like Amos are to be found among the shepherds of Tekoa, but not among hard-faced men and women whose finer sensibilities have been dulled by a heartless quest for earthly gain and pleasure. The pioneer of the literary prophets had a heart for the needs of his fellow men. He did not live a life which began and ended in mere selfishness. Indeed, his soul was stirred to its very depths by the crying social ills of his day. He simply had to lift up his voice, in the name of Jehovah, in protest against a type of civilization which was sure to come to grief sooner or later.

Then, too, we are reminded, of course, of Elijah, whose manner of life and long desert journeys to Horeb and elsewhere were a definite protest against the abnormal and revolting conditions of town life, due for the most part to the accumulation of wealth and to the debasing sensuality of vicious sanctuaries dedicated to numerous local deities, called Baalim. The scene on Mount Carmel was an attempt to rescue the people from the debaucheries of Baal-worship with its feasting multitudes and wine-mad devotees, and to bring them back to the simplicity and rugged piety of Jehovah-worship. It was quite obvious, both from a moral and religious standpoint, that Israel could not serve two masters. Elijah's sudden appearances and disappearances are accounted for by his active opposition to the inroads of a corrupt worship, combined with his championship of the rights of the people against

the political and religious tyranny of Ahab and Jezebel. He is the prophet of the simple life and he had reason to be. This reaction against the luxurious and self-indulgent habits introduced into Israel by the Canaanites had set in at a much earlier period, as may be seen from the vow of the Nazirite, in which some restriction was assumed. The distinguishing mark of Samuel's life-long consecration to Jehovah was the unshorn hair. Whether or not his consecration also took the form of abstinence from wine and strong drink, as in the case of Samson and John the Baptist, we do not know. At all events the vow of one thus consecrated was a protest against the demoralizing effect of Canaanitish innovations. May we not see in the Nazirate of Samuel a protest against the revelry of Eli's sons, who apparently were not any better than the average Baal worshipper of their day?

So, too, John the Baptist, as a true Nazirite, was separated from the world and wholly consecrated to God. Wine and strong drink were not to be part of his diet. Clad not in soft raiment, but clothed in a coarse and rough blanket of camel's hair, resembling the old prophetic garb of Elijah and other prophets, he retires to the desert in order to get away from the distractions of the teeming multitudes. John, possibly a young man by this time, had seen enough of "society," both in Jerusalem and in the hill country of Judæa, and he longs for the free and invigorating atmosphere of desert simplicity. What a relief to get away, during the period of preparation, from the social chaos of an artificial town life, with all its hollowness, insincerity and meaningless formalities! There was no place in the self-chosen privations of a desert atmosphere for "social lions," "flitting butterflies," flattering demagogues and fawning courtiers. John was not clad in soft raiment or distinguished by courtly grace; he was not a reed shaken by the vacillating winds of personal advan-

tage. The only royalty which he recognizes is the royalty of a clean heart and of a wholesome character. Consequently we can quite well understand why he should subsequently denounce, with such unflinching fearlessness, Herod's incest. Herod Antipas, the tetrarch, must hear the truth from prophetic lips, for in the realm of religion he is only a man whose social wrongs are a stain upon Israel's religion. It is for him to know that purity of life and character is more potent than earthly might. John's desert life and contempt for ease and luxury spoke of a strength of character and purpose which fascinated, for a time, even such a moral reprobate as the sly "fox" of Galilee. His manner of life, his meagre wants, the simplicity of his place of abode, the wilderness and all that it stands for, are a protest against the corruptions of the whole social fabric. The low moral condition of Palestine needed a tonic. While it might have been impossible for the contemporaries of the Baptist to revert to the simplicity of a desert atmosphere, they would nevertheless do well to heed the lesson which the gaunt but mighty recluse was trying to teach them.

As regards the religious background of the call of John the Baptist, it will be noted that the son of Zacharias preferred the solitude of the desert to the company of the scribes and Pharisees in Jerusalem. Though he might have become a priest by virtue of his birth, he renounces the priesthood and breaks with the recognized leaders of religion. In obedience to a higher call he leaves behind him the rabbis and the religious formalists in the metropolis of the nation in order that he might become a prophet by divine nurture. The wilderness was more conducive to the growth and development of the prophetic spirit than the cold and chilling atmosphere of Pharisaic formalism and Sadducean indifference. Although later Judaism was not altogether a dull piece of mechanism, as may be seen

from the gospel portraits of Zacharias and Elizabeth, of Simeon and Anna, and more especially of Mary, the mother of Jesus, the fact remains that for purposes of meditation, study and prayer the desert, with its stimulating background of prophetic precedent, could do vastly more for a youth who was to be a second Elijah than the hopeless viper-brood in Jerusalem, who had substituted for the heart service of the prophets the mechanical formalism of outward performances, prescribed by law.

The rabbinical comments, for example, on one of the sublimest passages in the Old Testament, containing the words, "Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," are limited to such questions as, Shall these words be recited standing up or lying down at the break of day, and shall they be recited audibly or inaudibly? This is but one of many instances showing that Judaism had reduced religion to a lifeless mathematical formula, to a codified lawbook of rites and ceremonies, of sacred days and sacrificial offerings, of tithes and temple-taxes, of moral and ethical precepts, all of which were defined with hair-splitting accuracy and precision. The letter and not the spirit of the law must be obeyed at all hazards. This minute and literal observance of the law became more and more a matter of pure calculation. It was not so much a question of how much can I do for a loving and gracious God, but how little may I do and yet obtain the greatest amount of blessings. If there were those in the time of John the Baptist who served God from purer motives, they were the exception rather than the rule. The whole development of the religion of later Judaism was in the direction of a stultifying legalism, as many a parable in the four Gospels clearly shows. The theoretical elaboration of the law by the scribes from the time of Ezra to the beginning of our

era was not wholly detrimental to the cause of religion, for it prevented the religion of the Old Testament from being submerged by the fierce tidal waves of Hellenic culture. The very definiteness of a well-defined system of legalized forms of worship and of practical living acted as a check upon heathen influences from without and rendered apostasy and idolatry increasingly difficult. But while all this is true, it cannot be denied that the externalizing process of Pharisaic legalism had gone entirely too far. Unconsciously and unintentionally, perhaps, the lawmakers of Judaism had legalized the very heart and life out of their religion. The religious plight of a misguided nation demanded a truly prophetic pathfinder, who would lead them away from the stagnant pools of Judaism and bring them to the Fountain of living waters.

But we are anticipating. It remains to say a word as to the political conditions of the time with which we are dealing. Politically, conditions in Palestine under Roman rule were certainly not any worse than they were in the days of Nebuchadrezzar, when the Hebrew nation lost its political independence. The Hebrew monarchy, after about four centuries of existence, fell to pieces with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B. C. by the armies of Nebuchadrezzar the Great. The major portion of the Hebrew people were deported to Babylon, and the national existence of the Hebrews came to an end. But the conquest of Babylonia by the Persians enabled the Jewish exiles to reestablish themselves in Palestine. From Cyrus to Alexander the Great, that is to say, from 538 to 333 B. C., the Jewish community remained a Persian province. The change from Persian to Greek rule brought Judaism into contact with Hellenism. The Greek period (333-175 B. C.) inaugurated a most dangerous secularizing process, which threatened the very life of the religious institutions of Israel. During the lifetime of Alexander the Great the

Jews were permitted to enjoy complete religious liberty. The founding of the City of Alexandria by the conqueror of Egypt brought to them many political and commercial advantages, of which the more enterprising gladly availed themselves. Upon the death of Alexander, in 323 B. C., Palestine became the bone of contention between the Seleucids of Syria and the Ptolemies of Egypt. Unluckily for the Jews, the Seleucids, at the beginning of the second century, secured control of Palestine. The life-and-death struggle which now ensued, brought on the Maccabean revolt. If Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B. C.) had not attempted to force Greek life and religion upon the Jewish commonwealth, Judaism might have succumbed, and the priceless treasures of Israel's religion would, humanly speaking, have been lost.

At this critical juncture the Jews, under the heroic and capable leadership of Mattathias and his five sons, succeeded in gaining their independence. An appeal to Rome, in the year 63 B. C., by two rival contenders for the high priesthood led to the loss of Jewish independence. During the Roman period from 63 B. C. to 70 A. D., the reign of Herod the Great (37 B. C. to 4 A. D.) brought a measure of independence to the kingdom of Judæa. Morally, however, his influence was not for good, his character being of the worst type. He was an Edomite by birth, and although nominally an adherent of the Jewish religion, the cruel tyrant cared more for the veneer of Hellenic culture than for the religion of the Old Testament. Some of his despicable acts are sufficiently well known to need no further elaboration here. Upon the death of Herod, the kingdom was divided among his sons as follows: Archelaus received the larger portion with the title of ethnarch of Judæa, Samaria and Edom; Herod Antipas was appointed tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa; and Philip, the tetrarch, came into possession of the regions beyond the

Sea of Galilee. Political conditions at the beginning of Christianity are reflected in the chronological statements of the third chapter of St. Luke, which are intended to fix the date of the official call of John the Baptist to his prophetic work, inasmuch as it was in the selfsame year that Jesus began His public ministry.

The date of this twofold event coincides with the year 26 A. D., John's first public appearance being assigned by the Evangelist to the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar. Palestine by this time had been divided into four parts. Judæa was governed by a Roman procurator in the person of Pontius Pilate, a self-seeking, unscrupulous official, who was always glad to compromise with principle whenever it served his own selfish ends. Herod Antipas and Philip are still in possession of their respective tetrarchies. Mention is made of a certain Lysanius, who had been appointed procurator of Abilene. The high priestly office in Jerusalem is entirely at the mercy of the political whims of the imperial mistress along the banks of the Tiber. Politically, conditions in Judæa were growing worse, if anything, not even excepting the despotic rule of scheming Herod or the misrule of Archelaus, who had succeeded him. Galilee, for that matter, had fared no better, the vices and not the virtues of old Herod having become second nature to Herod Antipas. Ah, but listen, ye victims of political despotism, to the echo of the herald's voice crying in the wilderness, "Make ye ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." Have the political hopes and aspirations of the Jews become vocal in the gaunt figure of the desert-loving prophet? Will he, like another Maccabee, break the yoke of the foreign oppressor and restore, in the power of Elijah come to life again, the political fortunes of a people destined to rule the world? The temper of the age demanded that the forerunner of the Messiah's chariot must needs be a po-

litical personage, heralding the near approach of a mighty political conqueror. Men in those days could not think of religious leadership without political supremacy.

This explains why Josephus, who is a good representative of Jewish public opinion, regards the death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod Antipas as springing from political causes. Speaking of the powerful preacher in the Jordan Valley, surrounded by multitudes of pilgrims eager to hear him, Josephus says, "Now, when many of the people came to crowd about him, for they were greatly moved by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to start an uprising (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise), thought it best by putting him to death to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it should be too late" (*Antiquities* XVIII, 5,2). Josephus is in error. This is clear from the gospel narratives. His mistake is typical of the Jews in general during the public activity of John and of Jesus. John was no political agitator. Politics does not lie in the sphere of his immediate interest, which is religious and moral. There is not the slightest trace of a political purpose in any of his recorded utterances. To the soldiers, who wanted to know what they might do to further the interests of the approaching kingdom, John says, "Do violence to no man, neither exact anything wrongfully, and be content with your wages" (Luke 3:14). The herald of a new age did not concern himself with political affairs any more than did that mighty Galilæan who established His kingdom not by force of arms but by spiritual means. The coming kingdom, which John announced, was spiritual. It was rooted in a dynamic religion, capable of renewing from within life in its entirety. Men's hearts must be renewed

before the political and social organism can be changed, but whereof more presently.

We must now discuss the call and prophetic mission of John the Baptist, as recorded in Matthew 3:1-2, Mark 1:1-8, and Luke 3:1-18. But as the parallel passages in Matthew and Mark substantially agree with the fuller account in Luke, our discussion will be confined to the pasage in Luke, which offers a greater wealth of detail than the other synoptists. As a matter of fact, St. Luke is the only Evangelist who refers to the call of John the Baptist. In Luke 3:2 we read, "The word of God came unto John in the wilderness." The expression, "The word of God came" is unique in the New Testament. It is the old prophetic formula, which occurs so frequently in the Old Testament. This phrase is met with almost exclusively in prophetic literature, such as the Minor Prophets, but more especially in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In general it has reference to authorized service for God in connection with the prophetic call. In the case of John it points to the prophetic character of his mission and brings him into line with the spirit of prophecy which seemed to have ended with Malachi. In John prophetic predictions have become a concrete reality. St. Luke introduces him as a God-sent preacher, fully conscious of his prophetic authority. What an inspiration to a man to know and to feel that "the word of God came" to him. How the prophetic call came to John is not stated. Some of the more recent commentators think that "the word of God came" to the prophet's inner consciousness, causing him, under the driving power of the inner urge, to emerge from his solitude, and to appear at the fords of the Jordan with the suddenness of an Elijah come to life again.

As no mention is made in the gospel narratives of a theophany in connection with the actual beginning of John's ministry, the question as to whether we are dealing

here with an external or inner call need not detain us here, since the inner call may be just as real and lasting in its ultimate effects as the sound of an objective voice made audible to the physical senses. Constituted as we are and for spiritual reasons alone, it does seem that the commissioning voice of conscience, which is really the voice of God, is to be preferred to a voice made audible by some other means. In any case, John's qualifications are unimpeachable. He speaks with authority by virtue of the call which has come to him. Multitudes of pilgrims gather around him, eager to get a glimpse of the mighty prophet and to hear his message. Everybody feels that he is possessed by the word of God and that he is a man of power. The very sight of a prophet, who reminded them of Elijah, was worth a day's journey to the Jordan River. Although John does not speak of himself as a prophet, he was nevertheless a prophet, according to the direct testimony of Jesus; then, too, the people in general regarded him as a prophet. The humility of the man was such that he simply calls himself a "voice." But he is no ordinary voice. He is a prophetic voice with no uncertain sound. Continuing his narrative, St. Luke says, "And he came unto all the regions round about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance with the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall become straight and the rough ways smooth."

John lays no claim to equality with the coming Messiah. To his disciples he says, "Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him" (John 3:28). John the Baptist declares that he comes exclusively for the purpose of making known the

Messiah to Israel. His function is that of a herald, or divinely appointed prophet, whose voice is not to be ignored. Referring to the historic appearance in the Jordan Valley of the God-sent messenger, the writer of the prologue to the Fourth Gospel says, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all men might believe through him." The object of his witness-bearing is to point men to "the light" in order to elicit faith in Him who was about to begin His public ministry. To the author of the Fourth Gospel "the light" is simply another name for "Jesus," "Christ" (Messiah), "Son of God," "Son of man," the incarnate "Word." There is a great difference between the providential mission of the precursor and the mission of Jesus. John knows that the flickering morning star of a new-born day will soon be extinguished by the full-orbed Sun. He realizes that his preparatory work is inferior to that of his incomparably greater successor, and that the work of the one stands in relation to the other as water to spirit or word to deed. The only office which he claims is that of a prophetic voice announcing the advent of the Messianic King and calling upon the people to prepare for His coming. He precedes, as it were, the royal chariot, preparing the King's highway in the pathless desert of this life, causing a straight, direct road to take the place of winding foot-paths by seeing to it that the contour of intervening valleys and hills assume the proper level. He is a pioneer, who removes obstacles, clears away impediments, makes crooked places straight, and rough ways smooth. But the obstacles which the pathfinder of a new age is called upon to remove, are not physical but moral and religious. The burden of his message is, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The kingdom of heaven, as the term itself denotes, is a

spiritual and not a human product. By an act of God it comes down from heaven and represents the rule of heaven's King over all the earth. It was not to be fashioned after the kingdoms of this world, nor was it to be brought down to the earthly and unspiritual level of the Roman empire or even of the shadowy adumbrations of divine rule under the Hebrew theocracy. It will be more enduring than these and other earthly kingdoms, because it is founded on heavenly, that is to say, spiritual principles underlying the realized reign of God in heart and life. A glance at the historic manifestations of the Hebrew theocracy shows how imperfectly the Old Testament ideal of the kingdom of God was realized. According to the Old Testament, God is the King of Israel, not to speak of His sovereignty over the universe which He has created. Under the monarchy the Davidic king was regarded as the representative of Jehovah. But the members of that dynasty and their respective reigns were poor embodiments of theocratic rule in and through Israel. Consequently men began to turn their attention to the Messianic King of the future in whom Israel's Messianic hope was to be fully realized. We know, of course, that the perfect realization of this ideal was deferred until the fulness of time. Meanwhile, however, there was an air of constant expectancy, even after the overthrow of the house of David.

From the days of the exile down to the coming of David's greater Son, the people in their forlorn condition longed for a new David to restore the lost glories of a politically oppressed race, and to take vengeance upon the heathen world-powers by whom they had been so long oppressed. Messianic prophecies were studied and expatiated upon with a new-born zeal. Apocalyptic literature, like the book of Daniel, must have been exceedingly popular, judging from its influence upon the development of the Messianic idea. The central figure of the apocalyptic

hope in Daniel is "The Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven," conceived as a heavenly being in opposition to the beasts which represented the heathen kingdoms. The four beasts, representing four Gentile empires, have a purely animal, that is, heathen character; they are of this world and typify the supremacy of brute force. The fourth of these empires will be overthrown by divine interposition in order that an everlasting kingdom may be set up. This kingdom comes down from heaven and will be ushered in by the power of God. The human form of the celestial being coming on the clouds of heaven, as opposed to the earth-born bestial kingdoms, shows that the Messianic kingdom is to be characterized by a supremacy essentially spiritual. The world-embracing scope of the divine kingdom will involve the ultimate overthrow of Gentile supremacy, "The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; it shall crush and destroy all these kingdoms, but as for it, it shall abide forever" (Dan. 2:44; compare chapter 7).

But the predominantly spiritual aspects of the coming kingdom are somewhat obscured by later Jewish apocalyptic writers in view of the political distress of the nation. While many passages, for instance, in such writings as the Psalms of Solomon, composed in the time of Pompey, when Jerusalem had come under Roman rule, attain a relatively high plane of religious idealism, there is substituted for the spiritual supremacy of the divine kingdom an essentially political Messiah, who will intervene victoriously in behalf of His people, put down Roman rule, and so restore the kingdom unto Israel. The first act of the Messiah, who is thought of as a human king and ruler but endowed by God with special gifts and powers, is to destroy hostile world-powers. In the Targums the Messiah, like a mighty hero, overcomes his enemies in battle. According to Jewish ideas, existing political relations were

an insult to the national prerogatives of a highly privileged people, who, instead of paying tribute to the Romans, were destined to rule the world. In general, Jewish Messianic ideas at the beginning of the Christian era are coloured very largely by national expectations. That the Jews regarded the theocratic kingship of the future as a sort of temporal monarchy with Jerusalem as the capital city of the world is only too apparent from the life of Christ. Though external or temporal blessings are not entirely absent from the Old Testament picture of the Messianic age, the blessings attendant upon the establishment of God's righteous rule upon earth will be chiefly internal and spiritual.

But the advent of the Messiah is also intimately associated with the idea of judgment. For those in Israel who are unprepared for His coming, "the day of the Lord" will be a day of judgment. In Isaiah and elsewhere "the day of the Lord" is a moral and religious necessity involving judgment upon irreligious pride and upon every form of sin. The establishment of God's universal rule in men's hearts and lives implies that this act of judgment will proceed, not along national but moral and religious lines. It will be determined by the attitude of the heart and the character of the individual and not by the accident of birth or physical descent from Abraham. The need of a thoroughgoing moral preparation for the Messianic age did not occur to the supercilious formalists in the Jordan Valley who had set their confidence in purely external standards and mechanical observances. They had supposed that the sifting process of judgment was reserved for the Gentiles and for those in Israel who did not live up to the external requirements of the law. But the fearless preacher in the wilderness informs them that national privileges and prerogatives will be useless and that the road which they have chosen will only lead to destruc-

tion. They will not be immune to judgment when the Messiah comes, for while the truly penitent will be baptized with the Holy Spirit, others, who are impenitent and unwilling to meet the conditions of the Messianic age, will be baptized with the fire of judgment. The Messiah "will gather His wheat into the garner, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:12). Or, to change the figure, "The axe also lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire" (Luke 3:9). Men lacking in sincerity will be among the very first to be condemned. The priests and religious leaders of the time were a slimy, creeping brood of vipers, seeking John's baptism in the hope of escaping "the wrath to come." They did not seem to show any disposition to meet the conditions required for baptism. John's rebuke was justified. God's plan of salvation will not be seriously interfered with if the foolishly proud and arrogant sons of Abraham are excluded from the Messianic kingdom, for God is able, out of the dry stones of the desert, to raise up spiritual seed unto Abraham. God's plan of salvation is not national but universal, "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6). The purpose of the forerunner's mission is to prepare the way of the Lord's Anointed, so that everybody, even those not of Israel, might see the salvation of God.

But the subjects of the Messianic kingdom must be prepared for the advent of the Messiah, and hence the necessity of repentance unto the remission of sins. If the proposed visit of an oriental monarch demanded the erection of a suitable highway for the royal visit, John's call to repentance was the most pressing need of the hour, since the road of the coming Messiah was to lead first of all to men's hearts before His kingdom could be established on earth. Like the old prophets, John speaks in the impera-

tive mood, " Repent," he says, " for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It has the ring of genuineness and of authority. Nothing else will do. It is the only fitting preparation for entrance into a kingdom which comes from heaven and which is so different from the kingdoms of this world. An earthly-minded and a time-serving expediency is conspicuously absent in the constitution of that kingdom. It is governed by spiritual principles, which are unchangeable and eternal, because they are so just and so all-inclusive. Religion and morality, worship and life are blended into one harmonious whole. To John, repentance was a far-reaching and radical thing. It effected not merely the outside of religion, such as outward observances and mechanical performances based on external standards; it was concerned more particularly with the inside of religion, with the inner motives, aspirations and purposes of the heart and with the direction of the will. The preparer of the King's highway could not endure the artificial and superficial religious and ethical ideals of his countrymen. They were on the wrong track. They were headed in the wrong direction. There was an externalizing bias about everything they did. Through the pathless desert of Judaism there reverberated the soul-searching cry of the mighty preacher, " Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

To repent means to change one's mind with respect to religion and life. When we speak of a change of mind we do not refer to something which is merely intellectual. The mind, according to Biblical psychology, is more than intellect. In the Old Testament the heart and not the mind is the seat of the intellect. As it would take us too far afield, were we to draw upon the many passages which might be cited in this connection, we shall limit ourselves to a few characteristic passages. In Proverbs 23 : 7 we are told that as a man " thinketh in his heart, so is he." According to Esther 6 : 6, " Haman thought in his heart "

that the king would take special delight in honouring him above his fellows. Isaiah 10:7 informs us that the Assyrian is the rod of God's punitive anger, but "he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; yea, rather is it in his heart to destroy and cut off many nations." Speaking of the destructive influences of vice upon brain-power, Hosea remarks, "Harlotry and wine take away the heart," that is, the understanding or intellectual brain-power (4:11). In another place Ephraim is characterized as "a silly dove without heart," or as we should say, without brains or, in this case, without political wisdom. But the heart is not only the seat of the intellect; it is also the mainspring of human action. The idea of repentance, however, is not restricted to the heart, although the latter may have a very vital part in the act of repentance. It is a complex process, for repentance may have reference to the emotions, to a man's conscience, and to the direction of the will. The word used by John frequently occurs in the Septuagint as the Greek translation of a Hebrew word, which expresses the idea of grief over a course previously adopted, but which has now come to be regarded as wrong and wicked. In many other passages of the same Greek translation it is the equivalent of the Hebrew word for turning away from one's evil ways and returning to God and His ways. It implies a complete reversal of one's conduct or a change in one's thoughts, aims, purposes and whole manner of life. Amos makes frequent use of this word in appealing to the people to turn away from their social wrongdoings and turn to God and adhere, in religion and life, to the lofty principles of an ethical religion.

To Hosea repentance is a turning back upon one's self and a coming home to the Father's house. It reminds us of that wonderful parable of Jesus, in which the penitent prodigal not only comes to himself but actually turns against himself and says, "I will arise and go to my

father." It meant the abandonment of a godless life, as also in Ezekiel, where the prophet says, "Turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" New Testament *metanoia* literally means a change of mind. But, as we have seen, this word contains a great deal more than that, as it is concerned with the heart as well. To repent, as understood by John, who more than any of his predecessors represents the true spirit of prophecy, also involved the idea of turning away from false standards of life and adjusting one's self to the conditions of a new age. For instance, the official representatives of religion are told not to trust in their Abrahamic descent but to recognize their individual responsibility to God. For them, repentance practically means, Turn away from the self-created snares of religious and moral perversion. The Sadducees must lay aside their rationalistic cynicism, their indifference and worldliness; the Pharisees must be liberated from their self-righteous hypocrisy and their cold formalism. The pure wheat of Old Testament revelation must be freed and rescued from the traditional and unspiritual chaff of hair-splitting lawyers. John did not mince matters. These unspiritual sons of Abraham were venomous at heart and would sting like a viper their unsuspecting brother Israelites. They wanted the baptism only and not the repentance which preceded it. To their way of thinking it was more important to wash the outside than the inside of the cup. A whitened sepulchre full of dead men's bones has at least the advantage of presenting to the superficial gaze of one's fellowmen the appearance of external cleanliness and purity.

Both John and Jesus penetrated to the heart of things. The religious formalists were informed that it was a spiritual, not a physical condition which qualified for entrance into the kingdom. If it were a question of replenishing that kingdom with the physical descendants of

Abraham, God could turn the very stones along the banks of Jordan and in that entire region into Israelites with the characteristic physiognomy of the children of Abraham. The fearless prophet in the Jordan Valley charges them with insincerity in coming to his baptism, not in response to an inner desire to lead a better life but out of mere curiosity and for the purpose of escaping the expected judgment which was impending. A good pedigree will not suffice for admittance to the new kingdom, which has made no provision for hereditary salvation. The kind of religion which is now demanded cannot be inherited from one's ancestors. One's relation to the kingdom of God is not determined by a family tree. Lineal descent from Abraham is no substitute for a radical change of mind and heart. They are fitly described as so many trees with the leaves of profession but without the fruit of performance, as chaff with only the semblance of wheat. As the seed of Abraham they ought to produce the fruits of Abraham's spiritual descendants. Lacking these, they ought to produce, as a test of their sincerity of purpose, fruits meet for repentance, that is to say, they should have endeavoured to make amends, wherever possible, for past shortcomings and sins, or at any rate, put themselves in line with God's gracious purposes.

Repentance ought to produce some results. No man can set his face toward the light of God's truth without some illuminating effect appearing in his heart and life. The very least that the Pharisees and Sadducees can do is to repent of their evil ways and to manifest a sincere desire for a deeper experience of religion and so produce the fruits of a well-rooted religious life. Not that there is any saving merit in repentance as such, for while only those who are truly penitent receive the forgiveness of sins, salvation is not merited by repentance. Says Zacharias in the closing verses of the *Benedictus* at the end of the first

chapter of St. Luke, "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready His ways, to give knowledge of salvation unto His people in the remission of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us." Salvation is bestowed by a compassionate God, who has caused the Sun of salvation to send forth His radiant beams from the heavens for the healing of nations groping in the darkness of this world. That was a lesson the work-righteous Pharisees needed to learn. They were playing around the periphery of religion to the neglect of the weightier matters of the law, such as compassionate mercy or an unselfish heart-interest in God and man. Their religion lacked depth and sincerity, because it was rooted not in love to God and man, but in the shallow, stony soil of a superficial legalism. They failed to realize that the seat of religion is in the heart, in the will, in the conscience, and not merely in the intellect. They had still to learn what Jesus said not long thereafter, "The kingdom of God is within you." Turning from his insincere antagonists to the people in general, John informs the latter in no uncertain tones that they must enter the kingdom through the gateway of repentance.

Upon hearing the Baptist's arraignment of the religious leaders of the nation, who were like so many barren fruit-trees and as hollow as chaff, the people, realizing the need of action of some kind in their own lives, asked John what they should do to prove the genuineness of their repentance. And what was the answer? Did they expect him to say that they should live an ascetic life or repent in sackcloth and ashes? His answer, calling for the exercise of brotherly love and of a genuinely neighbourly spirit, is an indication of the true greatness of the man, who was not interested in the external circumstances of the hermit's

life as such, nor in the Pharisaic piety of outside appearances. "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food let him do likewise." While these acts belong, strictly speaking, to the sphere of morality rather than of religion, they are nevertheless, under proper conditions, the product of an inward disposition. A charitable disposition, which gladly shares food and clothing with those in need, points to a change of heart with respect to our fellowmen. In the new age, human selfishness and greed and that miserable grasping spirit, which tramples upon men's rights and kills every finer instinct, must be dethroned, so that true religion—the kind of religion that is bound to produce fruit—may have its way in the individual life. John, it will be noted, passes by in silence the usual ceremonies of the law. Of course, the argument from silence is not in itself conclusive, and yet had the son of Zacharias been satisfied with ritualistic observances and legalistic performances he would have become a priest and remained in Jerusalem. John is a prophet and no priest, and hence his arraignment of the Sadducees and Pharisees. Like the old prophets, he is an advocate of compassionate mercy, of justice, honesty, fidelity and humility. The lip-service of cold formalism is a poor substitute for a religion of the heart with its spontaneous outgoings of love to God and man. The best commentary on this aspect of religion is the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37.

What repentance means in a practical way is further illustrated by John's reply to the publicans and soldiers who wanted to know what they should do. The change of heart demanded of them is a new attitude toward the ordinary duties of life. John's advice to the subordinate officials of the chief tax-gatherer of the Roman government is, "Extort no more than that which is appointed you." These Jewish tax-gatherers are told to avoid the besetting

sin of extortion, causing them to collect more taxes than the law allowed. The practical meaning of repentance in this case is, "Restrain your selfish impulses, curb your unjust exactions, stop your dishonest dealings, do not enrich yourselves at the expense of your fellowmen, be honest and refrain from extortion." Somewhat similar advice is given to a group of soldiers in answer to the question, "And we, what must we do? And he said unto them, Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse any one wrongfully; and be content with your rations." Whether or not these men were of Jewish extraction we do not know; at any rate, while crossing the fords of Jordan at this particular place they were not only attracted but also deeply impressed by the mighty preacher of repentance, who had connected repentance with the near approach of a new kingdom, the establishment of which would be preceded by an act of judgment on any who failed to make due preparation for the coming of the Messianic King.

Was there anything that they might do to further the interests of that kingdom? Yes; like every other prospective citizen of that kingdom, they might repent of their sins, for the prophet's call to repentance was not in the first instance a call to arms against the Roman government but against self and the sins which so easily beset men under marching orders. The establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth does not depend on military action; if it did, legions of angels would unsheathe their victorious swords and slay the tottering armies of hostile men. It is more important for the present that soldiers in the employ of the government abstain from oppressive methods and false accusations against rich and poor alike for the sake of supplementing their scant pay. Let them resort to proper methods. If action of any kind is needed, it is a change of viewpoint as to what really constitutes life and happiness. We ourselves must be reformed be-

fore we can hope to reform the world. Reformation must always begin in the mainsprings of individual character. This is the most important preliminary to a reformation of the world. Therefore the summons must be, not to arms, but to repentance, or a change of mind and heart with respect to religion and life.

The preacher of repentance put his teaching in a symbolic form. The rite of baptism characterizes his ministry, not that symbolical lustrations or washings were new to the religion of the Jews, but because he associated the rite with the new kingdom, regarding it apparently as an act of consecration and as an expression of loyalty to the kingdom of the Messiah. It was for this reason that he was called "the Baptist" or "the Baptizer." According to John 1:33, the preacher in the Jordan Valley received a special commission from God to baptize the people as a preparation for the advent of the Messiah. In Mark 11:30 Jesus virtually says that John's baptism was from heaven and not from men. Like repentance, it was a preparatory act for participation in the Messianic kingdom. The preparation demanded by the coming kingdom was a change of mind and heart, accompanied by a compelling sense of sin and the need for inward cleansing. What more fitting symbol of that inner purification of thought, will, motive and desire could be found than the water-baptism of John, which appears to have been preceded in all cases, except that of Jesus, by a confession of sins, either expressed or implied? While John did not pretend to baptize with the Holy Spirit, he could at least baptize with water, and thus prepare the way for the Messianic baptism which was to follow.

Through his preparatory work of calling upon sinners to repent and to seal their change of heart and life by baptism, John enabled some of his hearers to understand and follow Jesus. His work, to be sure, was only preliminary,

but so is that of every roadbuilder in the kingdom of the Christ. He was a herald for Jesus. This is the challenge and appeal that comes to every spiritually-minded young man. And what more glorious task could come to any mortal than that of becoming, by God's grace, a prophetic voice in the pathless wilderness of this world? To point out the path that leads to Christ is the plain duty of every Christian and more particularly of every consecrated son of Zacharias and Elizabeth. Are there no consecrated sons in the Church today who, having heard the word of the Lord that comes to them through the revealed Word of God, are willing to come forth from the solitude of years of preparation and sound the trumpet of repentance in the face of Pharisaic insincerity and self-righteousness, of Herodian depravity and moral laxity, and of a sin-laden multitude? If they have some of the moral fibre of John the Baptist in their heart and soul they, too, will turn their backs upon the " priestly emoluments " of the metropolitan city and upon the trappings and allurements of a sin-cursed civilization, in order that they might lead some of earth's weary pilgrims to the Christ.

## XI

# THE CALL OF JESUS

MATTHEW 3:13-17; 4:1-11

IN the Pauline Epistles the call of Jesus is referred back to eternity. According to I Cor. 8:6 and Col. 1:16-17, He is the agent in creation by whom all things were made. That Jesus is conceived as having played a real part in Old Testament history is clear from I Cor. 10:4, where it is asserted that the spiritual Rock which followed the Israelites in the desert and of which they drank, was the pre-existent Christ. In Phil. 2:5-7, the eternal Son voluntarily divests Himself of the glories of heaven and accepts the limitations implied in the incarnation. To come into our world from a previous state of divine existence and to be made in the likeness of sinful flesh is an act of sacrifice revealing the vastness of Christ's conquering love (Comp. Gal. 4:4-5; II Cor. 8:9). The idea of Christ's pre-existence is not peculiar to the apostle Paul. It is present also in the Fourth Gospel (6:38, 51; 8:42; 16:28; 17:5), and there is reason to believe that it came originally from Jesus Himself. The same idea of pre-existence occurs in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere in the first three Gospels. But if the eternal Son is to become the Christ of history there must be a period of preparation corresponding to the needs of human life.

The first step in the historical preparation of the Son of God for His Messianic work is the assumption of human nature. In the prologue to the Fourth Gospel the pre-existent Logos becomes incarnate and manifests Himself

in the flesh. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory like that of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." We would remark in passing that the glory thus revealed was not the Shekinah but the extraordinary power of doing signs, seven of which are singled out by the writer of the Gospel as typical of all the rest. That the author of the prologue has in mind the miraculous deeds of Jesus when he says, "And we beheld His glory," is clear from John 2:11, "This beginning of signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him." It was also part of His glory to know the thoughts of others by reason of His unique relation to the Father, "He needed not that anyone should bear witness concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man" (2:25). The concluding statement in the prologue reads, "No mere man hath ever yet seen God." But this prerogative, we are told, is accorded to the only begotten Son, whose relation to the Father is unique. Hence He is preeminently qualified, while on earth, to declare and make known the Father, for the revelation of God to the world of humanity through one standing to Him in the relation of Son is perfect in its mode and complete and final in its contents. His unique Sonship has its counterpart in the unique birth of Jesus, described in Matthew and Luke in words which are familiar to every reader of the Bible. The name Jesus is the Latin form of the corresponding Greek term, which in turn is the transliteration of the Hebrew Jeshua, or Joshua, meaning "Jehovah is salvation."

It is important to note that the Son of God became a man and was found in fashion as a man. Despite the miraculous birth it would be quite erroneous to suppose that "the babe in the manger" was unlike other children who, in all their weakness and helplessness, incidental to the period of infancy, need to be "mothered" into self-

consciousness and strength. The shepherds of Bethlehem might come and adore Him; the child Jesus was hardly conscious of their adoration. Wise men from the East might spread out their gold and frankincense; the newborn King could give them no smile of recognition, for it takes an infant at least a month to weave its first smile. The voluntary obscuration of the God-man's divinity was a part of the humiliation, referred to in Philippians. The ordinary conditions governing physical and mental growth were thoroughly human. His childhood, youth, and manhood did not differ radically from the corresponding phases of other lives, except that He was more precocious mentally and spiritually than other children. He was brought up in Nazareth of Galilee amid the simple surroundings of a carpenter's home. It was in the seclusion of Nazareth that Jesus spent more than three-fourths of His earthly life as an active business man, making ploughs and yokes and building houses. As the eldest son, He would naturally assume, upon the death of Joseph, the headship of this family of builders, ever mindful, during these silent years, that He must be about His Father's business. To this end He early imbibed and thoroughly appropriated the contents of Israel's sacred writings, chief among these being the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets. The New Testament is quite reticent about the early life of Jesus, though tradition, here as elsewhere, is garrulous enough. The only passages which afford a glimpse of His boyhood are found in Luke 2:40-52, Mark 6: 3, John 6:42 and 7:15. Here we read that "the child grew and waxed strong, becoming full of wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him."

Then follows the visit to Jerusalem at the age of twelve, where He became a "son of the law." The temple episode shows that the growing boy possessed rare mental powers, and acute spiritual discernment far beyond His years. It

was in this connection that He uttered the memorable words, "How is it that ye sought Me? Knew ye not that I must be engaged in My Father's affairs?" These words repudiate the paternity of his foster-father evidently referred to in the question addressed to the twelve-year-old, who had now attained the legal age. How absorbed He was in the things of God! He felt perfectly at home in His Father's house. Does He forget all else because the things of the kingdom are His first concern? What are the things of earth to a spiritually gifted mind like His! Are we justified in seeing, in the great hour of spiritual crisis, which marks the transition from childhood to youth, the first gleams of a dawning consciousness of His heavenly origin and of His earthly mission? Unfortunately, we are unable to pursue this thought any further for lack of evidence on the subject. There is a gap of eighteen years of unrecorded experience between the twelve-year-old boy and His official call at the age of thirty. The inspired records tell us that during this period of silent preparation, He was subject to parental authority, and that He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men." A literal rendition of this verse would read, "And Jesus advanced, or better still, cut (His way) forward in wisdom and age and in favour with God and men." He cut His way forward! This phrase suggests the idea of cutting one's way through the usual difficulties and obstacles met with in human life. Bodily growth must be in keeping with the ordinary laws of nature. Mental and spiritual growth in a land where the interests of daily life are chiefly religious, implies thoughtful study of the written Word and the doing of God's will on earth.

In face of the limitations of human existence, all this requires effort. So, too, in the life of Jesus. His physical and mental life plainly obey the rules of natural human development. The words just quoted enunciate a prin-

ciple that covers, to a greater or less degree, the entire life. The home, the shop and the synagogue had a part in His preparation and measured the life in its earthly limits, though in its height it touched the very heavens, reaching up among the infinities. Thirty years of patient concealment were required to prepare the God-man for three years of public work. During this time He not only learned the Aramaic language, which was His mother-tongue and vernacular with the Jews, but also acquired a working knowledge of the current Greek, for He quotes the Septuagint or Greek Scriptures. He was a close observer of men and things and had at His command, when He began His public ministry, a most profound knowledge of human motive and of human nature in general. As regards the practical working knowledge of human nature and the way in which it is to be influenced for good and completely changed, Jesus is without doubt the greatest psychologist that ever lived. He had made Himself such by years of patient preparation, silently awaiting the coming of the hour when with complete consciousness and perfected powers He should begin His Messianic work.

From this quiet life at Nazareth He was suddenly drawn by the preaching of John the Baptist, and the hidden years of silent preparation were at an end. But the beginning of His public ministry was preceded by the two final incidents of His preparation—the Baptism and the Temptation—which still had to take place.

To Jesus, the prophetic summons to the Jordan was a call to commence His work as Messiah. The call of the Messiah is the foundation stone of the synoptic narrative. The writer of the Fourth Gospel presupposes it, or rather regards it as a timeless act on the part of God and refers it to eternity. In Mark it forms "the beginning of the Gospel." That the Messianic call came to Jesus at baptism is attested by Luke also, who, after describing the

baptism of Jesus, adds this note, "And Jesus Himself, when He began to teach, was about thirty years of age." The baptism of Jesus signalizes the beginning of His ministry and the public consecration of Himself to the work He had to do. By it He was officially called and inducted into office. The descent upon Jesus of the Holy Spirit and the endowment of His human nature with the highest spiritual gift has some similarity to the inspirational effect of the call upon the prophets at the commencement of their public ministry.

It was reserved for the long-silent voice of prophecy to introduce to the Jewish nation its Messiah. Among the pilgrims in the Jordan Valley presenting themselves for baptism, was the august figure of a Nazarene who particularly attracted the attention of the stern preacher and filled him with a sense of his unworthiness to administer a rite, which could be administered much more effectually by his worthier successor. "John would have hindered Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me? But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer Me now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffereth him" (Matt. 3: 14-15). John objects because his "baptism unto repentance" includes a confession of sin and its remission. In the preparatory conversation with Him, John had made the singular discovery that the Nazarene had no confession to make, for the simple reason that He was utterly without sin. And, wonderful to relate, the claim is verified and confirmed by what John saw and heard in connection with the rite which Jesus was about to undergo. For the present at least, either from prophetic insight or from previous acquaintance, he sees in Jesus the stainless purity of a sinless soul and he hesitates and demurs. Intuitively he discovers, in all that concourse of people, the first and only sinless candidate for baptism, recognizing in Him that Greater One,

whose coming he has already announced and who, by His baptism of the Holy Spirit, shall inaugurate the new Messianic era. John's baptism is merely a preparation for the advent of the Messiah, and now that He has come, the Baptizer desires His baptism of the Spirit in order that he might enter the very kingdom which he proclaims to these waiting multitudes.

How incongruous, therefore, in this particular instance would be the administration of a rite which was commonly regarded as the outward sign of an inward penitence, pointing to a certain preparedness for the outpouring of God's Spirit in that fulness which was to characterize the Messianic age. Jesus, however, felt that John's baptism was of divine appointment and that it was incumbent upon Him to submit to it, thus " fulfilling all righteousness " in connection with the entire legal economy of God. Though it could be said of Him that " He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth," it was a part of His self-humiliation that He, as a law-abiding and, therefore, righteous Israelite, should observe with religious care every ordinance required of the people as a whole. Christ's subordinate relation to the law follows from the incarnation, and may well be expressed in the words of Galatians 4:4, 5, " born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem them that were under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons." If the male Israelite is brought into a covenant relation with the God of Israel by the rite of circumcision, then it follows as a matter of course that the same ordinance should apply to the Son of Mary. That Mary and Joseph should think otherwise is unthinkable. Accordingly the child Jesus, as a potential member of the covenant people, is circumcised, receiving on the eighth day of His birth the sign of the covenant. Twelve years later, to be about His Father's business practically meant for Jesus that He must visit His Father's

house, become a "son of the law," and learn with absorbing interest everything pertaining to the kingdom of heaven. If the "son of the law" went up to the temple, not only at the legal age of twelve but also at stated intervals in accordance with well established legal precedents, it was no less a duty for Jesus to present Himself, as His countrymen in such large numbers were doing, to receive baptism from John. The baptism of the latter, because of its divine origin, was intended for all members of the covenant people, and since the incarnate Son of God has already identified Himself with the Old Testament Church in the manner prescribed by law, He cannot escape the duty of accepting the water baptism of the forerunner, whatever He may have thought of the preliminary character of it as compared with the fuller and more complete baptism of the Spirit, which it was His prerogative to administer.

To Him personally submission to John's baptism is but an act of obedience to a divine ordinance. As a member of the covenant race He will subordinate Himself to every religious ordinance, even to those growing out of the sins of the people, in which He has no share except in a corporate sense. Acting in solidarity with His people, Jesus could accept the water baptism of John without any feeling of personal sin, as He had already done on similar occasions, particularly on the occasion of His first passover festival, which, together with other parts of the Old Testament sacrificial system, presuppose the idea of sin. In the case of all others John's baptism is preceded by the confession of sin (Matt. 3:6); with the sinless Nazarene, however, it is only an exemplification of the principle that it was fitting for Him "to fulfil all righteousness." Strictly speaking, it is not a confessional act on the part of Jesus, for He has no personal confession to make; it is rather an act of lowly obedience to a religious duty of His

day, by which He identified Himself with the deepest religious movement of the time. So far as the people are concerned, John's baptism is symbolical of their separation from sin and of their readiness for the righteous rule of God in the Messianic age, but in the case of Jesus it is a symbol of separation from private life and of a consequent consecration to God in the office of Israel's Messianic King. In other words, He recognized in the call to baptism the call of God to bring to a conclusion His life hitherto devoted to His inner development and to His family, and to begin His public career as the Messiah of Israel. So, then, to Him it is really a baptism of inauguration, or rather an open vow of sacramental self-dedication, body and soul, to sacrificial service. And may there not be some warrant for holding that the "righteousness" spoken of by Jesus in His second recorded utterance has reference to "the righteous Servant" of prophetic expectation, who "shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:11)?

To say that the suffering Servant only dawned upon Jesus toward the close of His ministry is to forget that, by reason of His penetrating insight into the conditions of His time and with His knowledge of human nature, there must have come to Him at the very outset the strong presentiment that the path of the Messiah would be one of suffering, that He would ultimately be despised and rejected of men, that He must needs be wounded for the people's transgressions and bruised for their iniquity. His study of the Scriptures told Him that. He was well acquainted with the rewards which had been meted out to the prophetic pathfinders of His people. Had the prospect been otherwise, the untimely death of John the Baptist in the early days of Christ's ministry would have had an entirely different effect upon the uncompromising Galilæan. Many sayings of Jesus spoken in the early days of

the Galilæan ministry clearly indicate that He was not sublimely ignorant or unconscious of the darker aspects of His mission (Matt. 5:10 ff.; 10:16 ff.; Mark 6:4; Matt. 13:57; Luke 11:50). Not many weeks after Jesus began His ministry He uttered the words, "Can the children of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days" (Mark 2:19). As a matter of fact, the shadow of the cross had already fallen on the baptismal waters when Jesus was standing on the very threshold of His ministry. How early Jesus anticipated the cross as a part of His Messianic work we have not the information to decide. But we are reasonably certain that Jesus had the prospect of death before Him from His baptismal experience at the Jordan, where His Messianic consciousness was definitely born and divinely sanctioned in the manner described in Matt. 3:16-17; Mark 3:10-11; and Luke 3:21-22. As one with humanity the sinless Nazarene, as already remarked, had submitted, prior to His Messianic call on the banks of Jordan, to various Old Testament rites and ordinances appointed for sinners, without any personal share in the sin and guilt of the nation, with which He had become identified by His assumption of human nature.

If it were right and proper for Him thus "to fulfil all righteousness," required by law, so now it is incumbent upon Him to descend with the forerunner into the quick-flowing stream, for the hour of divine destiny had struck on the clock of a new age, which marks the turning-point in the world's religious history. He passes into the baptismal waters, repenting and confessing the sin of the world, which He in loving, sacrificial service had made His own, and being in the attitude of prayer He emerges from the water as the heaven-proclaimed Messianic King, who is anointed for His work by the plenary gift of the

Holy Spirit. The sinlessness of Jesus and the special meaning of His baptism are sufficiently shown by the descending Spirit and the approving voice which He heard: "Thou art My Son, the beloved; in Thee I am well pleased." These words combine two familiar prophetic utterances, which were commonly regarded as referring to the Messiah. The first is taken from Psalm 2:7, and declares Him to be the Son of God, promised in what was generally regarded as a Messianic psalm (See also verse 2 in the original, where the Lord's Anointed is spoken of as the Messiah, who is none other, of course, than the *Christos* of Greek terminology). The second is a quotation from one of the great "Servant" prophecies in Isaiah: "Behold, My Servant, My chosen One, in whom I am well pleased; I have put My Spirit upon Him" (42:1). The Servant thus announced at the baptism of Jesus was not the nation Israel but the Christ of history who, as a single representative personality, gathered up in His own Person all that is highest and best in the religion of Israel and who, by a life of vicarious suffering (Isa. 53) achieved that higher righteousness which it had been the aim of the law to achieve. He is the special object of God's love, of a love such as the Father bestows upon His only begotten Son, because He is well pleased with Him. When the Spirit, like a dove, alighted upon Him, John knew for a certainty that He was the Messiah, as may be seen from John 1:33-34, "And I knew Him not, but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God."

The Baptist must have known that the Messiah was to redeem Israel from sin, for he takes occasion to point out to his disciples "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin

of the world" (1:29, 36). To what extent the idea of a suffering Messiah had influenced the theological thinking of the prophet cannot be ascertained. At any rate the figure of a lamb, which he uses in this connection, points to a sacrificial victim for sin. To Jesus Himself the baptismal flood plunging precipitately down the Jordan Valley until it issued into the Dead Sea may have suggested to His mind that other baptism to which He alludes in His answer to the question of the sons of Zebedee, when He says, "Are ye able to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Matt. 20:22). Referring to the baptism of death with which His ministry was to close, He says in another place, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I pained till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50). His consecration to the Messiahship at baptism was really a sacramental consecration to the work of Israel's Redeemer. Jesus' ideal of the suffering Servant of Jehovah was not the result of many painful experiences which came to Him in the course of His ministry; it was with Him, it seems, from the very beginning of His public career. He was a close student of Hebrew prophecy, and He knew that the world could be saved only by a self-sacrificing service that would not shrink even from death itself. Although Isaiah 53 had never been interpreted in a Messianic sense before the coming of Christ, Jesus of Nazareth has the great distinction of being the first to make the suffering Servant His Messianic ideal; and through Him self-sacrificing service to humanity has become the central teaching of Christianity. And so at Jordan, in the face of human need as it was represented in that vast multitude of penitents, He answered the Messianic call by a passionate prayer of self-dedication to sacrificial service, whatever that might involve.

The historic call of Jesus coincides with His baptism. At baptism He is officially called and set apart for a life-

work of Messianic service. By a voice made audible in some manner to His consciousness, the sinless Jesus is designated as the Messiah and there is granted to Him, for the fulfilment of His extraordinary mission, the measureless gift of the Holy Spirit, including the gift of miraculous powers. But the exercise of that mission is deferred for a time by His retirement to the stony and deserted regions of the eastern foothills of Judah. Not far from the western shores of the Dead Sea there now ensued a terrible struggle with temptation, resulting in the rejection by Jesus of all self-seeking methods in the realization of that kingdom which He came to establish, thus parting company, at the very outset of His earthly career, with the current Messiahship of ordinary Jewish expectation. In the three great temptations, recorded in Matt. 4: 1-11; Mark 1: 12-13; and Luke 4: 1-13, the culminating point is reached in the preparation of Jesus for His Messianic career. The meaning of these temptations is obvious enough, since they are essentially related to each other. The conflict rages around one central position—the Messianic leadership of Jesus. Though each temptation has its own features, there is a common theme running through them all. In every case there is an attempt to ruin, by unspiritual methods, what to the mind of Jesus is a purely spiritual kingdom. There can be no question as to the reality of the temptation, however one may argue as to the form of it. Whatever may be said with regard to the manner of the temptations recorded in Matthew and Luke, we may be absolutely certain that every one of the temptations was a very real thing to our Lord. To say, as some commentators would have us believe, that the incidents there related must be taken in a parabolic rather than a strictly historical sense, does not change the fact that it is a real conflict that is here depicted. As it is unnecessary for our present purpose to discuss the critical and exe-

getical problems connected with the gospel narratives, we will now endeavour to find out what the three temptations meant to Jesus.

Standing upon the very threshold of His mission, Jesus is confronted by a choice between two opposing ways of fulfilling His vocation. On the one hand, there is the way of patient faith in God and self-denying obedience to His will; and on the other, the possibility of a short-cut to immediate fame by an appeal to the popular earth-born craving for a worker of physical wonders, even if such a compromise tended to give undue prominence to material and political considerations and so obscure, for the time being, the spiritual and moral elements of the divine kingdom. Ought He not to yield, in some measure at least, to the common Messianic expectations of His countrymen, who were looking for the bestowal upon Israel, not only of spiritual gifts but also of earthly plenty, earthly glory and earthly power? Could He not be true to Himself and yet be the kind of Messiah they expected? The several temptations are only variations of the same theme.

That the temptation is a necessary step in the preparation of Jesus for His momentous task is quite evident from a glance at the Biblical narrative. All these accounts agree that it was the result of a divine impulse which led Him into the wilderness, in order there to endure a test, which would really be determinative of His subsequent Messianic activity. He meets each temptation, as we shall see presently, not as God who cannot be tempted, but as man. If the God-man was, as He must have been from all that we know of Him in the Gospels, a real man, He could not escape with a fictitious temptation. Why should Jesus be tempted at all, if He was not temptable? But why argue the point any further, when we are told that the Son of man, or man as God intended Him to be, "was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb.

4:15)? It is well to remember that while Christ was perfectly sinless, His temptations were as real as they are to any man. The incarnate Son who was uniquely endowed with the Spirit of God had to wrestle with all His might with the spirit of the world in high and low places alike. But with the descent of the Holy Spirit in such plenitude and power, there had come to Jesus the consciousness of His ability to work miracles. His temptations were inducements to abuse His miraculous powers for selfish ends.

The whole temptation was a prolonged attack upon His miraculous powers, seeking to divert them from their intended use, which makes it more than probable that these God-given powers were first consciously received at baptism, when the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in fullest measure. Jesus, however, regarded them as a trust to be held by Him in the interests of His official calling; and He clearly fixed in His own mind, for all practical purposes at least, the principle on which alone He would use those powers. His exalted consciousness of an endowment of the Spirit, so plenary and an anointing and dedication so divine, prompted Him to use His powers for none other but a single end, and that the very highest. In carrying out the commission thus entrusted to Him, He will make absolutely no use of His miraculous powers solely for His own benefit. Since they have been given Him for the purpose of fulfilling His mission, they shall be used only in the exercise of His official calling as Messiah. He will live and work for others and not for Himself. Self-sacrificing service, not self-gratification, is the law of His life. As an individual He will be subject to human limitations in common with others. On His part there shall be no capricious exercise of divine power for the sake of ostentatious display; no miracle will be performed for its own sake but only in so far as it may serve some higher end in the fulfilment of His mission. A fun-

damental rule of His Messianic activity is to perform no miracle, unless God directs Him to perform it. To this end Jesus waits upon the Father until His hour is come; God in His own appointed time commands Him to interpose in a miraculous manner whenever necessary.

The first temptation is based upon the great motive power of the world, which has given rise to the migratory movements of the nations of antiquity. Every student of history is familiar with the sad spectacle of vast multitudes of hungry people, moving westward with the irresistible force of an avalanche, in search for a more adequate supply of food. The pangs of hunger and the fear of starvation have driven men who are not naturally inhuman to the extremities and inhumanities of sheer desperation. In a country like ours we have no experience of hunger, especially in its severer forms. But the craving for food must be a terrible experience, to judge from the testimony of those who have endured it. The first Messiah-test, it will be noted, addresses itself to the feeling of hunger resulting from a period of prolonged fasting. The baptismal experience had led to a Lenten season of solitary preparation in the lonely desert for the work of the immediate future. Owing to a complete absorption of the spirit in the mighty issues now confronting Him, Jesus had become totally oblivious of His bodily needs. During all this time the life of Jesus had in some miraculous manner been preserved. But finally, sustained spiritual elevation and intensity of thought had to give place to the prosaic fact of gnawing hunger. It is to this natural craving for food that the first trial has special reference. The purpose of the first temptation is to make Jesus doubt His divine Sonship and turn aside from the hard path of duty by appropriating to His own use the miraculous powers with which His Father had endowed Him. Let Him prove His Sonship by yielding to a perfectly legiti-

mate want in a manner becoming His unique relationship with the Father. "If the voice at Thy baptism which called Thee the beloved Son in whom the Father is well pleased, was authentic and real, make use of the prerogatives of One so highly favoured and supply your physical wants."

Surely it cannot be the will of God that this beloved Son should become weak and emaciated with hunger when a single word of creative power might change a barren wilderness into a very paradise! If it is to be His mission to inaugurate a new era and if He is to meet the needs of others, He ought certainly be able to satisfy His own wants. If His miraculous power can be used for the benefit of others, why should He not draw upon the same source in the emergencies of His own life? To meet His present need He ought to be able to convert the very stones of the desert into bread, for here is a special emergency calling for the exercise of the special powers which one would expect to be at His disposal. Failure on His part to accomplish that much under the present circumstances means, without the shadow of a doubt, that He cannot possibly be that heaven-ordained Messiah to whom miraculous powers have been entrusted. All that is needed in this case is an easy exertion of His divinely given power and the whole scene will be changed. Does a man owe no duty to Himself? Is the duty of self-preservation any less sacred than that of working for the good of society? Would it not be easy for Him, who at a more opportune time transformed the waterpots of Cana into vessels of wine and who multiplied a few loaves and fishes into food for multitudes, to turn the loaf-like stones lying about Him in the desert into actual loaves of wholesome bread? It would be natural for Him to do so, distressed as He was by hunger.

And yet, why did He not do it? Because His super-

natural powers were not to be used for any personal purposes at all, however natural and innocent in themselves. He can perform miracles whenever God, in the fulfilment of His mission, desires it, but He must not turn His Messianic privileges to His own advantage. In strict obedience to His Father's will He is bound to wait for God's own appointed hour and then it is time to act, not before. Meanwhile the loaf-like stone in the desert must remain a stone, for God's creative word had made it such. He will act in harmony with the eternal word and will. He must not by any wilful act of His own take Himself out of the hands of His heavenly Father and manifest distrust in His providential goodness. To permit bodily cravings to take precedence over the great concerns of the Messianic kingdom would be nothing short of apostasy. That would be equivalent to a lack of faith in God to whose care He was definitely committed. And besides, why should the Son of God who has thoroughly identified Himself with humanity by taking upon Himself our nature, refuse to live a human life under human conditions? His entrance into human life would be a mockery and He would cease to be man, if all difficulties and dangers could be evaded by a quick appeal to His supernatural power. Whatever power over nature He may possess on the divine side of His nature, must be held in abeyance in His state of humiliation, whenever His own interests are at stake. On the physical side, He places Himself on a level with the weakest of men by dedicating all His extraordinary powers to beneficent uses only. He had taken His place among human beings and would not separate Himself from them by erecting a wall of divinity around His humanity. They could not convert stones into bread; neither will He, if it is a question of His own comfort. The temptation, it will be observed, is addressed to His divinity in the form of a hypothetical statement, calling in question heaven's own

proclamation on the banks of the river concerning the choice of Jesus, the Son of God, to be the Messiah; "If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

But Jesus refuses to remove the insinuation of doubt as to His Messiahship, not only because He had no intention of forestalling the providence of God, but also because He did not wish to satisfy the popular craving for a bread-king. Be it remarked in passing, that this temptation in the wilderness confronted Him in concrete shape in the midst of His career, when the people in their desire for a national Messiah who would appease their hunger and satisfy their material cravings, sought to make Him a king. But He rejected their overtures, because He knew that there are deeper needs in the heart of humanity than the want of bread. Owing to their relatively greater importance, God would take infinitely greater delight in satisfying these needs than the gratification of merely physical desires. Material proofs of His Messiahship would not lead to that repentance and faith, insisted upon by Jesus as necessary prerequisites to entrance into the kingdom. What could be better than a complete change of heart and life, what could be more desirable than the driving power of a dynamic faith, producing the fruits of self-sacrificing love to God and man! Nothing will be gained by stooping to the unspiritual level of popular hopes and desires. To yield in the present instance to the instinctive desire for food by the exercise of divine power, would have been something quite different from the Biblical idea of a miracle. Such a course would have degraded the miracle into the heathen conception of material magic, which was called into play without any moral purpose whatever. To Jesus, however, the issue is clear-cut. For had He not been driven into the wilderness by a divine impulse? If that is so, the circumstances in which He now found Himself

must be of God's own appointment. Consequently He will do nothing to controvert the will of Him that brought Him hither. If the first Adam doubted and disobeyed, He will put His trust in the sustaining power of faith in God.

If the first great temptation is addressed to His divinity, He will answer it in His humanity by an appeal to Scripture and take His stand on that. This much any man could do. As a pious Israelite who believed in the Scriptures, Jesus conquers by faith in the sustaining power of God's Word. He replies, not with an answer of His own, but with a singularly apt quotation from Deuteronomy 8:3; "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." In fact, all three temptations are overcome by quotations from Deuteronomy taken from passages found in the "Jewish catechism" immediately following the ancient creed concerning the belief in the only one God, the earliest religious lesson, and the daily morning prayer of His boyhood, all of which points to the lasting value of His early religious training. We also recognize in the passage quoted one of the themes upon which Jesus had been thinking during His prolonged desert fast, and from which He doubtless derived much strength for the ordeal through which He had to go. The reference in Deuteronomy 8:3 is to a parallel experience in the desert wanderings of Israel. The scene of the present temptation and His miraculous preservation during a period of forty days in which He had been without food, reminded Jesus of Israel's sojourn in the desert for a period of forty years. There is good reason in this particular instance for comparing the forty days to forty years in view of a similar comparison in Numbers 14:33-34, where mention is made of the forty years' sojourn in the desert "according to the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even

forty days, each day for a year." What Israel, elsewhere referred to as "My son" (Hos. 11:1; Matt. 2:15), should have learned from these experiences, Jesus, the true Son of God, learned from the experiences of the past. In Exodus 4:22-23, Israel's relation to Jehovah is compared to that of a highly favoured son. Here Moses is commanded to speak unto Pharaoh saying, "Thus saith Jehovah, Israel is My son, My firstborn. And I say unto thee, Let My son go that he may serve Me; and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, thy firstborn."

But Israel subsequently became an undutiful son, who had to be brought under the rod of God's chastisements in the desert. "And thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness to humble thee and prove thee, in order to ascertain what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might cause thee to know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jehovah." According to this passage in Deuteronomy 8:2, 3, Israel should have learned that man does not live exclusively on the ordinary means of subsistence, "but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jehovah," that is to say, God can in His own way sustain life at one time by raining down upon His people, in response to a definite need, the unknown manna round about the camp of Israel and, at another, provide the inner man with spiritual manna for the nourishment of his real self. Reference is made in the author's impressive review of Israel's desert experiences to the apprehensions and fears of the people in view of the danger of starvation which seemed to threaten them. But here was Israel in the desert at the call of duty, God Himself having commanded the Exodus

from Egypt. They lacked bread and God sent the manna. That unknown food should have taught them the lesson that human life does not altogether depend on the physical bread which they already know but upon whatever providential means God may have in store for them in order to satisfy their complex wants. They ought to know that a life lived in conscious fellowship with God must have more than things which are known and seen and handled by the organs of sense, for a man's life ought not to be merely that of the beast nibbling in the sun—one long forage for bodily food. His real life consists in obedience to the will of God as he may come to know that will in the course of a religious experience which has come under the guiding influence of God's Word, whether spoken or written.

Jesus in the barren stony desert west of the Jordan was for many days not conscious of His need of earthly bread because of His complete absorption in spiritual things, and yet He had been sustained throughout that lengthened fast. His meat was to do the will of God who had sent Him on His mission. High and holy thoughts had fed His hungry soul and the claims of the body were forgotten. Though faint with hunger at the end of forty days, Jesus rises to the consciousness of a higher need than the satisfaction of natural hunger. He must do His Father's will. He will not partake of any food which God had not provided, whether by natural or miraculous means. He, too, has been led into the wilderness by divine compulsion along the pathway of duty. He, too, will wait on God as Israel of old waited for the word that brought them food. The manner in which this is to be accomplished is left entirely to divine initiative. There is no need on His part for the exercise of miraculous power for, as we have already seen, the God-man by taking upon Himself our nature is debarred from using the resources of His divine nature to

raise Him above the common wants of men. He will do what any other man can do: wait upon God and trust Him most implicitly. At the end of the ordeal His faith is amply rewarded. We are told that angels came and ministered to His temporal necessities.

But faith in God may become sheer folly the moment it encroaches upon the dangerous borderland of presumption. Faith is not credulity. A fool-hardy faith always courts the danger of being dashed to the ground. This is the aim of the next temptation, as recorded in Matthew 4: 5-7, but which in Luke's account is placed last, the second and third temptations being reversed, possibly because Luke was dependent upon the oral tradition of some of those who had heard Jesus give an account of the several temptations but who repeated what they heard from memory in different ways. We believe, however, that the order of Matthew's account is to be given the preference, since the reversed order in Luke cannot be said to be an improvement on Matthew. It may be that Luke regarded the second temptation as the most severe, clothed as it was in the garb of a divine oracle, and hence the inversion of the order.

In the pinnacle temptation the attack is directed against the very thing on which Jesus had taken His stand in meeting the first temptation. He refused, as we have already pointed out, to appropriate to selfish ends the redemptive powers of Israel's Messiah. So far as His earthly needs were concerned, the Man of Galilee had substituted the wants and limitations of human existence for the divine prerogatives of His unique Sonship. Consequently, He will not, to satisfy His own hunger, convert a single stone into bread. If such a miracle is to be wrought in the present instance, God alone can perform it. He will have faith in the God of history. If manna was provided in the wilderness to sustain a hungry people in a

land unsown, surely God would in some way make provision for the temporal wants of Jesus at such a crisis as this. Moreover, man—the whole man—does not live by bread alone, but by every life-giving word that proceedeth from the Giver of every good and perfect gift, whether physical or spiritual. He is in God's hands. He had not sought the wilderness on His own initiative. Had not the Spirit, coming upon Him in the full revelation of His call, driven Him into the stony desert for a period of reflection and probation, prior to the beginning of His public ministry? That being so, He will trust God to the uttermost. At the call of duty He will depend on God most unreservedly and obey the leadings of His Spirit without the shadow of a doubt in God's ability to help. He has helped in times past, He will help now, for remember, "It is written."

The Son's implicit trust in the Father, it will be observed, furnishes the basis of the present attack. As in the first temptation, we again meet with the same initial note of doubt in the divine Sonship of Israel's Messiah, "If thou art the Son of God." If He is, then let Him prove it publicly, in the presence of Israel's leaders and of the worshipping congregation in the temple area, by doing something that would attract immediate attention. The people everywhere would forthwith recognize His claim and forget the humble carpenter shop in Nazareth from which He came. No other credentials would be needed than to make some signal display of His Messianic powers. Why hesitate, when it would advance His work by leaps and bounds? Remember, this is the temple, the earthly habitation of the Lord; within its sacred precincts God will permit no lapse of His promise to take place, least of all in the case of His Son who, by His refusal to do a selfish thing, has already given a remarkable demonstration of His faith in the providence of God. But having refused to think of Himself, let Him now think of the people and of their

needs. How laudable of the Son to have complete faith in the Father and to wait upon Him, where His own interests are at stake. But now He can be of real service to the people and advance His work tremendously by a faith that takes God at His Word. Now is the time to test that faith in the interests of altruism and see how great His faith really is. The appeal, in the second temptation, is to the faith of Jesus in the inviolability of God's promises without reference to the context or to some other passage of Scripture, which might throw considerable light on the subject, the object, of course, being to lose sight of the fact that such promises are generally coupled with certain conditions—expressed or implied—which must be met before the promise can be fulfilled.

Thus, by an act of absolute faith and boundless trust in the Father, Jesus is to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. " For it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee, to guard thee, and on their hands they shall bear thee up, lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone." It is interesting to note that an attempt is made to neutralize the quotation from Deuteronomy 8 : 3 by a quotation from Psalm 91 : 11-12, reading as follows, " He shall give His angels charge concerning thee, to guard thee in all thy ways; on their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Why the above quotation from the ninety-first Psalm should appear in an abbreviated form is not quite clear, unless the " ways " spoken of in the original might have reminded Jesus of the fact that man's ways are not of his own choosing; they are of God's own appointment. They cannot be the self-chosen ways of human arrogance and spiritual pride, for all such ways are " outlawed " in the religion of Israel. The religious man must order his life according to the known ways of God and the attempt to substitute his own ways for the ways of God would be

nothing short of apostasy. In the realm of religion, man's ways and the ways of God must coalesce, otherwise God's promises are null and void. So, for example, it does not require much reflection on the part of Jesus to know that to cast Himself down from the temple heights would not be in line with God's plan of salvation. The progressive unfoldment of the kingdom of God on earth is not the work of a moment, nor is it the result of an astounding feat in the physical universe.

The cause of the Messiah is not served by guilty haste in trying to expedite the slow processes of the kingdom. The true way of God's Anointed is the way of loving, sacrificial service and of utter self-effacement. If others, by their own impetuosity and impatience, have tried to force the hand of the Almighty, He will resist that temptation. Jesus has the fullest confidence in the ability and willingness of the Father to interpose in His behalf, when it is for the best interests of the kingdom, but He will not begin His ministry as a worker of physical wonders merely to satisfy the vulgar desire for something new and sensational in religion. His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. Outward display can effect no real spiritual change in men's hearts and lives. The Messianic kingdom must make its strongest appeal to the heart, conscience, and will of the individual. While the eye-gate may have its place in religion, our greatest visions are seen by the eye of faith. These are spiritual and have more to do with the spiritual renewal of the inner life than anything else on earth. And yet faith must never degenerate into wilful arrogance and impious presumption. Spiritual pride is always fatal to religion. Absolute confidence and trust in God is an integral part of faith, but to plunge ahead in the religious life without paying heed to the known ways of God is not faith but blind fatalism. Let no man, in such a case, presume on the promises of God! The divine promises are

conditional. There must be no wilful or persistent deviation from God's will. By the doing of His will we put ourselves in line with His gracious promises.

Jesus knew that it was not God's will that the kingdom should come suddenly as by a stroke of magic or that He should leap from the pinnacle of the temple amid the applause of the acclaiming multitude. The people clamoured for signs. They thought that the coming Messiah would do something striking to inaugurate His mission. This expectation was the forerunner of such temptations in His after-life as the demand of the people to show them signs and wonders that they might believe in His claims. Shall He gratify the popular demand for a wonder-working Messiah whose credentials shall be based upon miraculous acts, sensational devices and sensuous thrills? According to the apocryphal Messianic dreams with which the religious atmosphere of the time was filled, the Messiah was to appear suddenly and in some marvellous way as, for instance, by a leap from the temple roof into the midst of the crowds assembled below. Would such a public display of His faith in God and of His miraculous power lead to the fulfilment of the divine promise contained in this portion of the Psalm? The divine promise of protection and guardianship is indeed assured to every trusting child of God, but only in so far as " thy ways " are " His ways." Since " My ways " are not " your ways," man must not choose his own course of life without reference to the revealed will of God. Thus, we may be sure that to startle sense-bound men into sudden faith by the dazzling spectacle of a miraculous descent into the superstitious throng would be contrary to God's way of doing things. Such an acrobatic feat, even within the sacred enclosure, might dazzle the senses and arouse the awe of the gaping multitude, but no mere physical wonder could ever in itself lead to a real dynamic faith in the Son of God.

The endeavour to gain popularity by such means would have been fatal to the Messiah and His work. An effervescent religious movement would have been the result. Jesus was not satisfied with the superficialities of the popular demand. Merely to scratch the surface of things and leave untouched the larger possibilities of religion was nothing short of disloyalty to God's plan of salvation for the Messianic age. Jesus had a higher duty to perform than to seek His own glory or force the hand of the Almighty by a presumptuous act. He will resort to no compromise with present duty for the sake of immediate results. Such a course would be hazardous in the extreme. At best it could lead only to superficial results, leaving no permanent gains for the cause of true religion. The path of duty, though it may ultimately lead to the cross, is the only path of safety. Not even the Son of God can deviate from the divine plan of salvation in its relation to the Messianic King of Hebrew prophecy. Nothing shall mar His obedience to the will of God. He is ready to serve and suffer, and if need be, to do and die. He, therefore, thrusts aside the impious suggestion and meets Scripture quoted with a bias by a word of rebuke from Deuteronomy 6:16, where it is written, "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God." In the period of the desert wanderings Israel, on more than one occasion, provoked the wrath of Jehovah by murmuring against the supposed inadequacy of divine providence. They could not forget the fleshpots of Egypt and the abundant water supply of the Nile Delta. Prompted by impatience and a sinful distrust in the whole course of events constituting part and parcel of their desert experiences, "they tempted Jehovah, saying, Is Jehovah among us or not?" (Ex. 17:7). They doubted God's presence, because of His failure to anticipate, all along the way, by a series of miraculous deeds, the bodily needs of His people. They required a supernatural

proof of His presence. They were not satisfied with God's way of doing things. Consequently they were not willing to trust and obey. They wanted to force the issue and precipitate a crisis, to see if God would not meet, in a miraculous manner, the need of the hour.

Similar conduct on the part of Jesus to that exhibited by the Israelites at Massah and Meribah would not have been a proof of His absolute faith in God, but rather an act of insubordination and defiance of the will of God. It is one thing to trust, another to tempt. We cannot trust God too implicitly while we are walking in the path marked out for us by a benign providence, but to choose our own path and thrust ourselves into perilous positions in order to force a miracle from God, this is sheer folly and fanaticism. For Jesus to cast Himself down from a wing of the temple, merely for the sake of empty display, is to put God to the test under conditions which do not call for divine intervention. His refusal, therefore, to tempt God in this manner does not point to a lack of faith on His part; indeed, it is a proof of His obedient trust in the adequacy of the divine plan of salvation. No other is needed. Man-made methods cannot improve upon it. Though sorely beset on every hand by human ignorance and spiritual unpreparedness, Jesus will nevertheless address Himself, in God's own chosen way, to the fulfilment of His mission. The phantom of earthly success, purchased to all seeming at the cost of a trivial compromise, will have no charm for Him. The way of men and the quick road of a compromising attitude will have no place in the divine program.

In the first temptation, as has already been pointed out, the appeal is to the physical instinct of self-preservation and bodily gratification; in the second, to a perverted use of the religious instinct in keeping with the unwholesome demands of the dull-souled populace for signs and wonders necessitating miraculous help for what is born of

human pride and presumption; and in the third, to a political substitute for the spiritual kingdom of the Messianic age. St. Luke, for reasons of his own, inverts the order of St. Matthew, giving as the second temptation what the older tradition places last. The third of these temptations was that of empire, or of a national Messiah founding a world-kingdom by a series of political achievements. It presents a short-cut to a universal monarchy by methods corresponding with those in use among the kingdoms of the world. All these may be His, if He will only give up His spiritual conception of the rule of God on earth and fulfil the current national expectations that were beating strong in the heart of every Jewish patriot. For centuries the Jews had looked forward to a Golden Age, when God's rule should be complete and the oppression inflicted upon them by pagan nations would cease forever. The coming Messiah loomed up in their distorted fancy as a political deliverer. Under the leadership of David's greater Son the dominant Roman power was to be overthrown by a popular uprising, accompanied by miraculous intervention in behalf of the oppressed. Little did the people realize that the coming kingdom was to bring relief from spiritual, rather than political, slavery and that Jesus would be more concerned with the ills common to humanity permanent and universal, than with the political grievances of His people.

That in the ultimate issue His work would embrace the world, was a fact present to the consciousness of Israel's Messiah from the very first. But He has no desire to become the popular Messiah of political agitators nor to dig for the foundations of His kingdom amid the quicksands of pagan politics. If His kingdom is to endure the change and decay of pagan empires and of earthly kingdoms in general, He must build on the solid rock of God's unerring purposes. His kingdom is spiritual and not something

gross and earthly. It cannot be established on the shifting sands of Machiavellian politics. The influence He is seeking is not that of political power or brute material force, but a spiritual influence which shall permeate society by the leavening process of individual attraction. He will build up the kingdom from within, laying the foundations deep as eternity and as wide as the universal plan of God, and not begin at the outside by building up a great shell of external conformity to religion and then fill it with the inner reality. To begin the building process from without instead of from within would be to imitate the example of the " whited sepulchres " sitting in the seat of Moses, or of the proud Herodians who thought more of their Roman citizenship and of doing homage to the court of Cæsar than of their spiritual birthright. How different is the plan of Jesus from that which obsessed His race and in the end lured them on to their destruction in the tragic years of 69 and 70 A. D. Had they followed the leadership of their Messiah instead of listening to political agitators, like Bar-Cochba, they might have been spared the pain and humiliation of a disastrous campaign against the Romans some sixty years later (132-135 A. D.).

From the very first Jesus declined to have anything to do with political affairs, since the current Messianic hope had degenerated into fanatical visions of a glorious earthly kingdom under the leadership of Israel's Messiah. His kingdom was not of this world; it was primarily spiritual. Consequently He stood aloof from the ways of the world, avoiding the plots and plans of unspiritual men in their mad struggle for political power. The crown, indeed, was to be gained, but only by a life of self-sacrifice and the way of the cross. He, therefore, refused to accept the world's way to a temporal kingdom, preferring the spiritual conquest of human hearts by a life of loving service to the temporary rewards of imperialism. He might have

attained a measure of immediate success without much difficulty, without self-sacrifice, without the exercise of so much patience before He could hope to rule over an empire of hearts and lives, had He been willing to bow to the universal Jewish conception of the coming kingdom as a vast structure of material force. This is the meaning of the third temptation with its promise of world-power over the nations of the earth. From the summit of a high mountain Jesus obtains a passing glimpse of the kingdoms of the inhabited earth lying at His feet. In that panorama one would naturally expect to find the Holy Land, then divided into several petty principalities and the provinces of the Roman empire comprising many conquered kingdoms. A rapid survey of the eastern portion of it would have included the descendants of the once powerful empires of Babylonia, Assyria, Persia, India and China; to the north, one would see the lands once peopled by the Israelites of the southern and northern kingdoms, and still farther north, the inhabitants of Damascus and the nomadic hordes of Scythia; to the south, the liberty-loving Arabs, the polished Egyptians and the sunburnt dwellers of Ethiopia and Libya; and to the west, the philosophic Greeks, the proud Romans and the tribes of Europe.

All these kingdoms, centring in the city of the seven hills whose roads stretch to the watery confines of earth, shall belong to Jesus and be subject to His rule, if He will but consent to a compromise with evil, and use unholy means to accomplish His ends. According to the gospel narrative Jesus is recognized by the tempter as seeking a universal kingdom, as intending, indeed, to found one. The tempter shows Him "all the kingdoms of the world" in all their glory and strength, their beauty and natural attractiveness, suggesting at the same time how a glorious supremacy over this plurality of kingdoms might be gained and won at once by an act of homage to the ruler

of a sinful world. Though the "prince of this world" exercises a measure of control over the hearts of sinful men in the present state of the world, his claim to absolute authority and ownership over all created life is not surprising in view of the deceitfulness of sin. "To Thee will I give all this authority for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it." His claim is that of usurped dominion exercised by a tyrant master over slaves led captive by him at his will. All the powers and rights vested in this pretender to world-dominion shall be transferred to Jesus if He will but fall down at his feet and recognize his authority. "All these things," he says, "will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down" and do homage to me as your superior.

It is as if the tempter had said, "You are the divinely chosen Messiah, but you are a king without a throne. I will show you the way to a throne surpassing that of Cyrus, Alexander or Cæsar. In building up your kingdom learn a lesson from the way in which earthly kingdoms have been established. The secret of their greatness lies in their ability to utilize, to the fullest extent, the political forces of their day, and throw about them, in the form of a political organization, the iron ring of military prowess and of earthly might. Take, for example, the Roman empire. Yonder there in Italy lives the emperor of the world, who is a firm believer in the principle that might is right. His procurator in Cæsarea is a time-serving, vacillating politician, who is always thinking of number one, and that is why he gets on in the world. In Galilee virtue is crucified and yet lustful Herod contrives to reign because he, too, has learned to put his trust, not in exalted religious principles but in chariots and horsemen and in the arts of political trickery. Everywhere, no matter where you look, unscrupulous politicians are in the ascendant. Political prestige is won by worldly methods and not by

religious idealism. You must make some concession to the prevailing spirit of worldliness, if your Messianic program is to succeed. Do not be too consistently religious, and do not take the purely spiritual aspect of your kingdom too seriously. If you do the religious leaders of your own nation will reject you. The leaders in Jerusalem—who are they? Men who are great in things external, advocating political rather than spiritual liberation by a resort to arms in the name of religion. You want to establish a spiritual kingdom, but it is hopeless to effect this by acting on men individually and spiritually. With your Messianic powers coupled with a generous admixture of worldliness, you will soon be able to build up for yourself an earthly kingdom which shall embrace the world. Learn to rule like other men, even though you are to rule on a grander scale, and make subservient to your Messianic purpose the means and methods of Cæsar and your success will be swift and sure."

But Jesus despised the wretched qualities of the time-honoured politician,—sordid manipulation, compromise and the exaltation of expediency above principle. Political sagacity and worldly wisdom might suggest the short-cut way of forceful self-assertion and the way of the political conqueror to a throne like that of Cæsar, in which might should take the place of right and force the place of love. But to establish the Messianic kingdom at the expense of a compromise with evil principles would have been a form of devil-worship, robbing the kingdom of heaven of its true character and converting it into a kingdom of earth under earthly conditions and earthly laws. This kingdom was to be something better than the Roman empire, something more permanent than any earthly form of government. While the attitude of Jesus toward the Roman government was one of respect, as may be seen, among other things, from the answer which He

gave to the question concerning the tribute money, He must refuse to build His kingdom on what is at best but a tottering empire, especially when compared with the eternal character of Christ's kingdom. Though He was subject to "the powers that be," rejecting on more than one occasion the revolutionary ideas of His Jewish contemporaries, history teaches that the Messianic kingdom will not blend with any earthly kingdom and that the duration of earthly kingdoms and empires is in proportion to their ability to discharge their God-given function.

The kingdom of Saul, for example, was of divine appointment but the kingdom was taken from Saul and another anointed in his stead the moment he stooped to self-seeking methods and egotistic self-aggrandizement. The ship of state in the reign of David almost suffered shipwreck, but the king repented of his wickedness, and although the threatened punishment was mitigated and postponed for the time being, this sinful act was punished in one way or another in the subsequent history of the Davidic dynasty. The kingship in Israel's after days went down to defeat and ruin because the leaders of the nation had sought an earthly substitute for the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God, like the earth itself, is "founded on righteous foundations." The very powers, alluded to by the apostle Paul in the thirteenth chapter of Romans, disappeared before the spiritual solvent of Christianity, before the two-edged sword of a more spiritual conception of government. A political revolution in the time of Jesus or of Paul would have been positively injurious to the cause of Christianity, and besides, it was entirely unnecessary; the impact of Christianity upon the life and thought of the nations was such as to react in one form or another upon every domain of life, political, social and religious. The Roman government of Paul's day is no more; the Holy Roman empire and many modern governments have

suffered a like fate. Things are so constituted that when governments no longer serve God-given ends, they inevitably crumble away and disintegrate by a law inherent in the historical process. Since God has at no time abdicated the throne of the universe it is sufficient to know that He rules the world in accordance with certain divine principles, which never lose their efficacy. The kingdom of God in the very nature of the case can brook no compromise with the world. If there is to be any levelling done at all, it must be a levelling up to the lofty plane of the kingdom of God; there can be no levelling down on the part of that kingdom to earthly standards.

The very suggestion to the contrary is regarded by Jesus as a temptation to pursue the path of political achievement as a means of overcoming opposition to the establishment of His kingdom. To yield to the evil suggestion would have been a violation of the fundamental law in Deuteronomy 6: 13, in which God demands the exclusive service and worship of mankind. This clever appeal to earthly ambition, showing that the goal to a universal empire is comparatively easy of attainment, provided Jesus will accommodate His plans to the needs of a worldly atmosphere, is met with the stinging rebuke, "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve." Submission to the will of any creature and all that it stands for, is rank idolatry and, therefore, treason against God. But there will be no turning aside on the part of Jesus from the divine purpose, nor any detachment of His will from the Father's will. There is to be perfect agreement and harmony between Father and Son. The service and worship that is demanded for God alone shall be the motto of His kingdom. There is not the slightest doubt in His mind that the kingdom must be established by spiritual forces alone and defended by spiritual weapons. With unfailing in-

sight and unfaltering will He turned away from the path of earthly glory and chose the path that ultimately led to cross-crowned Calvary, transfigured and forever sanctified by a love which was no less than divine. Thus the third temptation, suggesting an unwise course of action, is overcome and Jesus is ready to begin His public ministry. Then the tempter left Him " for a season," and returned personified now as Peter, now as Judas, and again as the Jews.

Having definitely ascertained the principles which are to guide His work, Jesus, after thirty years of preparation, is ready to undertake His God-given task. His victory over the three temptations, already discussed, makes it clear that He shall live and work for others, trusting to the slow but sure processes of moral and spiritual forces, since these alone can change the hearts and lives of men. One thing, moreover, is quite certain, and that is, that the Messiah is above all a spiritual King and not an earthly potentate. This means that He must correct the erroneous notions of the majority of His countrymen regarding the Messiah, and prepare them for the coming of a spiritual kingdom. Although absolutely convinced of His Messiahship, as may be seen from the foregoing accounts of His baptism and temptation, Jesus refrained for a time from declaring Himself to be the Messiah, fearing that a premature declaration would find His countrymen utterly unprepared for the message which He was about to bring to them. The work of preparation, inaugurated by the forerunner, must be continued, especially now that the fearless prophet has been slain by wicked hands. In the opening chapter of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus begins His Galilæan ministry, " preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe in the gospel " (compare Matt. 4: 17). A spiritual kingdom demands spiritual preparedness.

Such a kingdom cannot be established by an act of power on the part of God in the forms of the national theocracy, but solely through a spiritual activity, the success of which depends upon the condition of the heart.

If what is primarily a spiritual kingdom is to take form at all, it must be realized first of all, within the hearts of men through a religious and ethical regeneration of the people at large. Jesus demands a change of heart and a faithful acceptance of the good tidings which He brings. The call to repentance implies, as we have seen, a change of mind and a complete reversal of one's thoughts and inner motives. This command of Jesus involves a change of heart and life, or a turning away from self to a life of unselfishness. To turn away from self and a world of sin and to go back to God, that is repentance. The emphasis is upon a right attitude of the heart rather than upon the external act. Under proper conditions the kingdom of God, which is entered by the gateway of repentance and faith, becomes a present possession, not through revolutionary changes in the external conditions of life, or through upheavals, paroxysms, and miraculous interventions. This kingdom is a kingdom of true love, in which the Father's will is enthroned in the hearts of men, prompting every one of its subjects to obey the law of loving service for the good of all. It is about to be realized in the hearts of men; indeed, "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand."

This is the glad message which Jesus proclaimed at the beginning of His ministry. What is meant by the term "Gospel" is evident from that memorable discourse in the synagogue at Nazareth, where the Nazarene announces the fulfilment of prophecy and Himself as fulfilling it. According to the fourth chapter of St. Luke, Jesus, on His arrival in Nazareth, went as usual to the synagogue. He stood up to read and selected a passage from the sixty-

first chapter of Isaiah descriptive of the Messiah's beneficent work, thereby expounding to His fellow-citizens a part of that gospel which it was His mission to proclaim. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor, He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. . . . Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." That day, the silver trumpet of a far better jubilee was sounded, announcing the beginning of the Messianic age. The primary reference of the prophecy is to the return of the Hebrew captives in Babylonia to their native land. According to the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus, where the year of jubilee, to which Jesus refers, is described, the trumpet of jubilee is to be sounded at the end of seven seven-year periods and all transactions in landed property for the fifty years previous shall be revoked. Ancestral property, temporarily disposed of under the pressure of necessity, shall be restored to its original possessors or their descendants, for the possessions of a Hebrew household or clan are not to be alienated in perpetuity. The redistribution in the jubilee of all ancestral holdings contributed to the re-establishment of the original arrangement regarding assignments of land to the households and clans of Israel.

Closely associated with the legislative enactments with respect to landed property is the subject of property in slaves. The servile class, be it remarked in passing, was frequently augmented by insolvent debtors, who had sold themselves into servitude to work off a debt. The law treats of both forms of property—property in land and in slaves—under the same head; both shall be subject to similar regulations. The periodic redistribution of ancestral holdings together with the liberation of enslaved debtors

in the year of jubilee is given a wider, an eternal meaning by our Lord, when He seizes upon this, the gladdest festival of Hebrew life, regarding it as a type of the Messianic age, in which the spiritual discords of life are to be resolved into the divine harmony of a life fashioned after the pattern of Jesus Christ. But what is freedom from political bondage and the restoration of economic rights in the land of Palestine, when compared with "the acceptable year of the Lord," bringing spiritual release and redemption to a world of afflicted and bruised sinners, and pouring upon their wounds the oil of gospel gladness? What a wonderful sermon that must have been which Jesus preached in His home town that day, setting forth the nature of the gospel as interpreted by the peerless Prophet. The spiritual program which He presented to His townspeople on this occasion was of infinitely greater worth than the economic program of jubilee restoration. At last the hour of spiritual emancipation has struck, and a divine day of opportunity has dawned. The ills of life find their ultimate cure in the faithful acceptance of the gospel which Jesus preached. It is needless to add that there is involved in this also a personal faith in the world's supreme Evangelist, Healer and Emancipator.

From the very beginning of His public career, Jesus goes forth full of the Spirit and anointed for Messianic service, to unfold His clearly-conceived, definitely accepted mission. And what a remarkable sense of mission was His! In the prophecy He read in the synagogue, Jesus declares, "He hath sent Me." Similar expressions, pointing to the consciousness of His divine mission, occur time and time again in the gospel narratives. We quote at random a limited number of such passages belonging to different periods of Christ's ministry. Jesus emphatically declares, "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, for therefore am I sent. . . . Last of all He

sent unto them His Son, saying, They will reverence My Son. . . . God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved. . . . I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. . . . I have a greater witness than that of John, for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works which I do, bear witness of Me. . . . Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me. . . . Say ye of Him, whom the Father hath consecrated and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God? . . . O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. . . . They have believed that Thou didst send Me. . . . This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."

How are we to account for this sense of mission in the life of Jesus? Why was He called of God and commissioned by Him for Messianic service? The answer is not far to seek, and it can be stated in very simple language. John 3:16 tells us that "God so loved the world that He gave." It was need in the world plus love in God that constituted the call of Jesus and gave to Him that wonderfully compelling conviction of vocation. The Son of man came to seek and to save the lost. The world without Christ is lost. The Master's business, therefore, is urgent. He must make haste in view of the greatness and immensity of the task committed to Him. The harvest truly is plenteous but the labourers are few. What are a few workers in face of a universal need! The field is the world. What infinite possibilities! If Jesus came into the world to meet a great need, do we need more than sufficed for Him? As has been pointed out, the historic call of

Jesus coincides with His baptism. Of all those who have been baptized and confirmed only a comparatively small number have heard the commissioning voice of a loving God to sacrificial ministerial service. In the case of many, the baptismal vow of consecration to God and His Church, reaffirmed at confirmation and at the Sacrament of the Altar, has led to nothing more, so far as one can see, than to a compromise with the spirit of this world. Seemingly the love of God in Christ has appealed to them in vain. A heart actuated by love to God and man will hear the call of a needy world, where the loveless and callous heart will turn but a deaf ear to the appeals of a loving God, knowing no duty beyond that of mere self-interest.

Every youth will do well to look in his own heart and make sure, whether or not the call of God is failing of response for lack of love to a perishing world. It may have been there but perhaps it was driven out by selfish desires, and the love of Mammon has taken its place. In such a case it will never do, in the presence of the all-seeing eye of the great Searcher of hearts and motives, to hide, under one pretext or another, from the solemn personal consideration of our duty to preach the gospel to the lost. The sooner we rid ourselves of all these shuffling evasions by which the devil is attempting to persuade us to escape from our duty, the better. Have some of us been trying to hide behind the suggestion of doubt as to our personal responsibility in the matter of preaching the gospel? How easy it is to succumb to the suggestion of doubt! "If" is a devil-word, which needs to be guarded against. What a formidable weapon it is in the hands of the tempter. Judging from its use in the temptations of Jesus it must have been regarded as a rather formidable weapon. You will recall that the tempter came to Jesus and said, "*If* Thou art the Son of God."

So he tempts promising young men now with his evil

whispers, breathing doubts of all sorts into their hearts and minds regarding the ministry to which God has called them. One of the most perplexing questions that comes to them is, Are you really sure that God has called you, and how do you know? as if the inner urge to serve God and our fellowmen in this special way had nothing to do with it. However, we would not imply that this is not a perplexing question to some men, for we know only too well that not all men are called to the work of the ministry. We are also sure of the fact that not all men who enter the ministry are really called of God. The abortive attempts of some to enter the ministry, possessing no qualifications whatsoever for this highest of all callings, are most pathetic. There is scarcely anything more pathetic than for a man to miss his calling in life. And yet, while we grant all this it is just as certain that not all men whom God has selected for ministerial service, actually find their way into the ministry. Positively it is not true that if God wanted more men in the ministry He would call them. Such a view throws the responsibility for the inadequacy and dearth of ministerial candidates and the consequent loss of large portions of the spiritual harvest entirely upon the Lord of the harvest. God's plan of salvation, as we know, is world-embracing, and the fact is that God does call a sufficient number of men for the work of the ministry but many of those who are called become a prey to the allurements of a tempting world. The temptation to turn aside from the ministry may assume various forms. The insinuation of doubt concerning the ministerial vocation may be succeeded by the desire to " convert the stones into bread " by calling into play every ounce of faculty of body, mind and soul for the satisfaction of earthly needs. By nature we make our stones bread; we are prone to use every God-given power for our own ends. Jesus might have turned aside from the rugged path of duty and en-

tered one of the more alluring walks of ambition by the exercise of His God-given powers, but He chose the path of loving service and of self-sacrifice. He showed to the world that there is something higher and better than the instinct of self-preservation and self-love.

Every young man looking forward to his lifework should bring himself, in some degree at least, to the measure of Christ's ideal of service. If you want to be a follower of Jesus Christ, instead of following Mammon all your days merely for the sake of bread, you must make His Messianic ideal of sacrificial service to humanity your own and apply it in your life and conduct among men. The tempter comes to you and says, "You have certain gifts, capabilities and talents, by which you can secure comfort and position in the world; use these for your own advancement and lay up treasures on earth against a rainy day." Or he may point you to some of your former classmates in high school or college, who have gone into business or into one of the more lucrative professions and have prospered and grown rich. They will never be pinched by poverty or burdened with debts like the prophet who has never learned the art of converting stones into bread. Remember that to preach repentance to the people and to rebuke the ruling classes for their sins is not a very lucrative undertaking. Think of the fate of John the Baptist and of Jesus. That ought to be enough to make you hesitate and turn back from the path of Christian service to the world as you find it. Why should you renounce home and comfort and the opportunity to rise in the world to undertake the hopeless task of casting out the devil there is in every man? Why sacrifice the ordinary ambitions and enjoyments of life for the sake of an ideal? Seek the prizes of earth and you will obtain them.

Ah, yes; but the tempter has forgotten to state that by seeking the bread of earth a man may sometimes lose his

soul. For no man has a right to choose his own course of life without reference to the will of God, whatever that may imply in his particular case. He would be a fool who feared to bid every capable and consecrated Christian young man whose heart has been touched by men's deepest needs, choose as Christ chose. The prospect of such a lifework may make you painfully conscious of the "breadless desert" in which the prophet frequently finds himself. But remember that the doing of God's will and obedience to His Word will bring to you another kind of bread, the sweetness of which must ever escape the lips of the tempter and of his duped cohorts. The devil never makes good his promises. "He is a liar from the beginning." It never pays to disobey God's will. By choosing, out of purely selfish motives, one of life's many bread-careers, a potential prophet may fill his body with bread and yet remain the hungriest man in the world. Why be satisfied with the husks of earth, when the heavenly manna of a life lived in accordance with God's will may be yours? Ministering angels do come to many a breadless and hungry prophet. Seasons of refreshment are not lacking in the life of every prophetic preacher. To a genuine prophet, the Word of God is far more precious than any of the "sweetmeats" of earth. Obedience to that Word is better than bodily gratification. How much better it is for a man who is conscious of power in a given direction not to restrict the use of that power to selfish ends but to use it as a good steward for the welfare of others.

To be sure, it requires the grace of God and some strength of character to make the right choice. To Jesus personal gain and worldly advancement meant nothing; the doing of God's will was infinitely better than a lifelong forage for bodily food. Jesus indignantly refused to entertain a suggestion so utterly opposed to His spirit of consecration, so subversive of all His high purposes and

lofty hopes. He overcomes the first and succeeding temptations by quoting from Deuteronomy. This shows how well He had learned the lessons of His childhood and points to the lasting value of His early religious training. The studies of childhood and youth had contributed their share to the knowledge which had been acquired through well-nigh thirty years. Jesus knew more than the letter of the law; He learned to breathe the spirit of the writings that speak of God. Who would have thought that early home training and attendance upon synagogue and temple would have such a large part in the preparation of Jesus for Messianic service? Nothing is ever wasted in the life of a truly consecrated man who is willing to place all his gifts on the altar of service. Thus the things which in the period of preparation may seem insignificant and trivial will be transfigured and magnified by the transforming influence of a fuller consecration.

The sin of presumption in religion, alluded to in the second temptation, reminds us of the young man who is able to decide to go to college or enter some business pursuit but who, for lack of sufficient consecration, is unable to heed the divine summons to preach the gospel to a lost world. He is the type of man who is always saying, "If God really wants me in the ministry, He will see to it that I get there." Strange, is it not, that the same young man will not ask for a miracle to force him into the business of making money, as if it were a matter of indifference to a Christian whether or not God wants him in business. His precipitate haste to enter business leaves no time for a miracle which might point to the ministry as a possible lifework. When it comes to a business career he is old enough, he thinks, to make his own choice, but when it is a question of his entering the ministry or not he expects God to move heaven and earth and work a miracle in the physical universe merely for the sake of demonstrating to

him in some visible way that God wants him in the ministry. Down in his heart he knows that the miracle for which he asks will not be forthcoming. Moreover, the miracle, if granted, would do no good. This faithless craving for a miracle is nothing but a subterfuge prompted by moral cowardice. Let a man be honest with God and with himself and the way of duty will become increasingly clear. It will not be long before he becomes fully conscious of his profound spiritual debt, of the world's need, of the unique power of the Gospel, of his duty of service and of his ministerial commission to apply the saving power of a liberating gospel to the sin-fettered slaves of earth.

For God does call men; He calls them in various ways, but more especially through His Word, whether it comes to them through the ordinary reading of the Bible or in the form of a sermon. To expect a special revelation before one can be reasonably sure of the divine call is to tempt God. The only sign that will be given to such a faithless generation of men is "the sign of the times," reinforced by God's dealings with men in the past. A truly consecrated Christian of the right sort and with proper qualifications for ministerial service will ask for no other miracle. It is sufficient to know that God has need of his services in the most glorious enterprise in all the world and that the divine plan of salvation is ample for every human need. Can any man, in the face of all that God has already done and is still doing, particularly in the realm of grace, have the audacity to ask for a miracle in order that he may be forced into the ministry against his will? God's omnipotence does violence to no man. If some in times past have been thrust into the ministry, this was due to the compulsion of an inescapable sense of duty and to the compelling power of an inner necessity rather than the application of physical force. God will not stoop to the level of a wonder-worker in the physical realm merely for the sake

of overcoming a man's unwillingness to serve Him in the prophetic office. But the miracle to which God will consent is to bring divine pressure to bear upon a man's moral and religious sensibilities, so that he will eventually yield himself to the guiding and directing influence of His wooing Spirit.

The blind forces of nature, by a show of physical power, can destroy a man who violates nature's laws, but in and of themselves they can effect no spiritual transformation in the soul of man. God only, by the winsomeness of moral suasion and spiritual processes, can effect such a change. This is the miracle for which every potential but unwilling prophet should be asking. That kind of a miracle will surely come to pass, provided a man is open to conviction. This, of course, presupposes a receptive heart and a willingness to serve others. Such miracles are wrought on the lofty heights of Christian idealism and not in the stifling valley of human selfishness. To a man who can turn away from self and, from the vantage ground of an altruistic love, begins to see the needs of others, the tempter comes and says, "Come down from those lofty heights, otherwise you will dash your feet against a stone. The idealist is a dreamer who will sooner or later come to grief, because he is unable to come down to cold reality. The prophet's path is hard and uphill; he cannot hope to change the course of things for men love to have it so. He does not seem to realize that the prophet generally becomes a martyr to the cause, because he is too far in advance of his time for the people to understand him. Will they not look upon him as a demented and dangerous person? Do you know what the people have done to the greatest of the prophets? The verdict of one of the wisest Jewish statesmen in the time of Jesus was that 'it is better that one die for the people than that the whole nation perish.' And are you better than Jesus? What did an-

other politician say about the apostle to the Gentiles? Why, Paul, 'thou art beside thyself.' It is only necessary to recall that the religious authorities in Jerusalem imprisoned Peter and John for preaching the gospel and that the Roman authorities at Philippi did likewise with Paul and Silas rather than have the whole population in a state of turmoil. Think of the fate of Peter and Paul and of many others too numerous to mention. Think of all these things, and learn to come down from those precipitous heights before it is too late or you will suffer the consequences. And besides, do you hope to convert the world by the slow processes of character-transformation? Think of the untold millions of individuals that have to be evangelized before any noticeable impression can be made upon this unwieldy and slow-moving mass of humanity. It simply cannot be done. Why fight a losing battle? Why not think of yourself? Therefore, let me caution you to come down from the pinnacle of your religious idealism. You have got to take the world as you find it; you cannot hope to change it. Do what the vast majority of people are doing: Cast yourself down, like Israel of old, before the golden calf. The god of gold claims many devotees from every land. Follow their example and the world will do you honour."

When the tempter has succeeded in dashing our religious idealism to the ground and we grope and grovel around in the valley of earthly desires, we would even presume on the help of divine grace to carry our self-centred, self-advertising schemes through. How pious the wish in such cases that if God prosper our efforts we will make a liberal contribution to the church or to foreign missions, as if the giving of things could ever compensate for the giving of ourselves in sacrificial service! That is only another way of making trial of God for purely selfish ends. Indeed, it dishonours God because it holds out the pros-

pect of a bribe in return for material prosperity. The Creator of heaven and earth and the Owner of all things visible and invisible cannot be bargained with in this way. "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God." How far removed is this sordid spirit from Christ's ideal of sacrificial service. He gave Himself without reserve, not asking for any reward save that of a good conscience. To have yielded to the superficialities of the popular demand would have left untouched the larger possibilities of religion. He will be loyal to God's plan of salvation; there will be no scratching of the surface of things. While it is true that many men go into social service work with the very best of motives and accomplish great good, it is equally true that some go into social service work who ought to enter the Christian ministry. To go into social service work as a substitute for ministerial service is to scratch the surface of religion. Dig deeper, my friend, for the golden ore of a still larger usefulness lies beneath the surface.

The third temptation suggests how a glorious supremacy might be won over the kingdoms of the world by an act of homage to the exponent of evil. The fleeting panorama is one of surpassing beauty. What an enchanting scene! How fascinating and enticing! Why not accept the kingdoms which have been offered and snatch at the bait held out by the tempter? Because only a small part of the picture has been shown. Behind all this superficial display of glittering tinsel, there is concealed the dark background of sin and the slimy ways by which kingdoms often have been won. Not infrequently purple robes and earthly crowns are lined with the thorns of uneasiness and fear, of cares and anxieties of all sorts, because they have been gained by sordid diplomatic schemes, by wicked plots, cruel massacres and bloody battles. There is some reason for the adage, "Uneasy rests the head that wears a

crown." Worldly kingdoms may be had by the adoption of worldly methods. In the case of Jesus to yield to the lure and love of earthly power would have been equivalent to a tacit acknowledgment that the principle of evil is more potent than that of good, and that the kingdom of God could not hope to succeed on a large scale without some concession to the rule of evil in a sinful world. In such a world, only a visionary could hope to overcome evil with spiritual forces; evil must be met with evil, force with force. This has been the false political philosophy of the Pharaohs, Sennacheribs and Herods, of the Alexanders, Cæsars and Napoleons of history.

And we are suffering still from the same destructive philosophy. How easily men are persuaded to bow to this Satanic suggestion. Far less than the offer of world-dominion will suffice to lead them astray from the divine purpose. Men break with God and hush into silence His commissioning voice and the promptings of the heart to enter the ministry for a momentary pleasure, a handful of glittering dust or the prospect of a more lucrative calling than that of the ministry. A mere promise, though it may never be fulfilled, is often sufficient. The tempter's promises are deceitful; he offers kingdoms which it is not in his power to give, for "the earth is the Lord's." He is still lavish in his offers and liberal in making promises which, by reason of his duplicity and double-dealing, generally remain unfulfilled. But for whatever he offers he must have a full equivalent. So, for example, kingdoms are offered in return for worship on the assumption that whoever receives the worship actually holds the kingdoms. This pretence of benevolence on the part of the tempter is shown at last to be utter selfishness, for worship involves service. "All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." That worship and service belong together is evident from Christ's reply, "Thou

shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve." Religion means worship and service, sacrifice and devotion to the object of our worship. To Jesus, worship without the whole-hearted consecration of every God-given power to highest and noblest ends is unthinkable. There must be, along with our worship, a willingness to serve God and our fellowmen. To worship God with reservations is a form of devil-worship. We cannot serve God and Mammon at one and the same time. God demands not only our worship but also our exclusive service. Religion is not a pious folding of indolent hands in the sanctuary; the half-hearted and insincere prayers of loveless lips for more labourers for the Master's vineyard are no substitute for loving personal service. Where there is no disposition to hear the Master's call for ministerial candidates, the prayer that others might go to the home or foreign field is a meaningless and deceitful contrivance by which the Mammon-worshipper hopes to evade his personal responsibility in the evangelization of the world. The selfish man never takes the religious idealism of Christ's gospel too seriously. The tempter usually finds him an easy victim, because the man with a divided allegiance always has his price. Not so the man in whose heart the Father's will is enthroned and who is striving to make Christ's Messianic ideal of loving service to God and humanity his ideal of life.

Jesus had but one great Master passion, one great aim and purpose, and that was to preach the gospel of the kingdom. Following John the Baptist, He reaffirmed the nearness of the kingdom, saying, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe in the gospel." The acceptable jubilee year of divine grace was announced by Christ many centuries ago. The time has been fulfilled for nineteen hundred years, and the kingdom of God is still in the process of coming, here in

the heart of this and of that individual, of this group of Christians here and there, wherever Christ's conditions of entrance into the kingdom have been met. His vision of a universal and world-embracing kingdom is only partially realized, because men the world over have had their eyes too much upon the kingdoms of this world, and because men's quest for the kingdom of God has been relegated to second place. If men lived for others half as much as they do for themselves, and if they exhibited half as much zeal for the kingdom of God as they do for the things of the world, this sin-cursed earth of ours would soon become a veritable paradise, peopled with liberated captives and redeemed souls enjoying the blessings of a perpetual jubilee, in which the discords of life have been resolved into the divine harmony of a Christ-like life. But the time of fulfilment, to which Jesus refers in His inaugural address, has been restricted to a comparatively small area of the earth's surface. And why is this? Because the conditions of a universal fulfilment have not been met. As the near approach of the kingdom demands spiritual preparedness, the emphasis must ever be upon the proper attitude of the heart toward that kingdom. Jesus put the emphasis upon a change of heart and mind. This is the crux of the whole situation. The kingdom of God does not come more rapidly because men's hearts and minds are too full of the things of earth. Human selfishness and worldly interests are still enthroned in countless hearts.

My young friend, perhaps you too need a change of heart and mind with respect to the Christian ministry, for it may be that with all your God-given talents, you may yet become a factor in world-wide evangelization. If it is true that every Christian in the early Church was a missionary in the sense of being a witness for Christ, whether in his official calling as a preacher or as a consecrated layman, then what of your witness-bearing? Should there be rea-

son for thinking that God has called you to full-time Christian service, then face the issue fairly and squarely like a man. In that event do not attempt to substitute part-time service as a consecrated layman or as a social worker. Have nothing to do with pious pretexts, for the way to perdition is paved with good intentions. The selfish life is doomed and only the Christ-like life endures. Whatever you do, do not sell out to the tempter, for worldly emoluments and material gain are a poor recompense for the loss of your soul. Therefore, change your view of life, and make it conform to the Master's ideal of self-forgetful service and though evil may triumph for a time, Christ will be exalted and His Kingdom will come through you and all His faithful disciples.

From the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus made the suffering Servant of Isaiah fifty-three His Messianic ideal; and through Him self-sacrificing service to humanity has become, as previously remarked, the central teaching of Christianity. This is God's plan of salvation. Jesus accepts the plan and rigidly adheres to it from beginning to end. Short-cuts to the goal that was set before Him are consistently repudiated. Nothing can change His course; the Father's will is supreme. How we need to learn this lesson today! There is no higher ideal than that of self-sacrificing service to humanity. Let us embrace it and consistently pursue it.

## XII

## THE CALL OF THE TWELVE

JOHN 1:35-51; MATT. 4:18-22; LUKE 5:1-11, 27-32; MARK 3:13-19; 9:36-10, 39; LUKE 10:1-24

IN discussing the call of the Twelve it is interesting to note that the man who prepared the way of the Lord's Anointed also furnished the first disciples for the Messianic kingdom. The latter half of the opening chapter of the Fourth Gospel informs us that they had been prepared in the school of the herald, who seemed to take special delight in introducing to Jesus his choicest disciples. How refreshing, in this selfish world, to see a man who is content to hand over some of his maturest disciples to One greater than himself. John's emphatic testimony to Jesus as the sin-bearing Lamb of God accounts for the eagerness of the two disciples mentioned in John 1:35 ff. to meet Him who was to sweep away the sin-caused troubles of the world. Looking intently upon Jesus as He passed the place where He had been baptized not long before, the Baptist suddenly exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turned and beheld them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? and they said unto Him, Rabbi, where abidest Thou? And He saith unto them, Come and ye shall see." Prompted by an overmastering desire to become better acquainted with the passing Figure, in whom they felt so keenly interested, they followed Jesus, but not wishing to stop the great Teacher on the road, they inquire after His lodging-place, so that they might interview Him at a more opportune

time. But Jesus, in His characteristic way, bids them come at once, for now is the day of salvation. He knows that they have more to ask than can be answered on the spot, and so He asks them to come with Him and spend with Him the remainder of the day.

This first interview with Jesus made such a profound impression upon one of the disciples that followed Jesus that He could not refrain, in describing the incident years later, from noting the exact hour when the interview began. The disciple in question remembers the very hour of this crisis in his life, which was also of moment in the history of Christianity and of the world. He says, "it was about the tenth hour" that day, or about four o'clock in the afternoon, when they entered His lodging-place and sat down to listen to His words. That was a memorable hour, for it marked the beginning of an acquaintance which ultimately issued into uninterrupted discipleship. On that never-to-be-forgotten day they saw more than a poor hut in which the great Teacher lodged. They began to see something of the glory of Jesus as the incarnate Word, referred to in John 1 : 14. While we look in vain for any express mention of the topic of conversation, the outcome of the conversation points to the Messiahship of Jesus as the theme which engaged their thoughts that evening; at any rate, they saw in Jesus the promised Messiah. One of the two disciples of John who conversed with Jesus "was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah." Who the other disciple was is not stated. The unnamed person is none other than the author of the narrative itself, whose characteristic reserve about himself will not permit him to introduce his name into the sacred record.

Continuing the narrative we are told that when the first pair of brothers arrived, Jesus looked at Peter and said,

"Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas." Andrew in bringing Simon would naturally make mention of the name and parentage of his brother. But the penetrating glance of Jesus pierced the very heart of the latter and discerned in this prospective disciple latent possibilities of rock-like strength and firmness. Cephas, "a rock," is the Aramaic equivalent of the Greek Petros. The new name, which is given in this case, points to the new relation into which Simon is about to enter. "A rock" is the emblem of firmness and stability among the Greeks as early as the days of Homer. (Od. XVII, 463.) This new name, of course, is prophetic of what Simon is yet to be. For the present he is anything but a rock; he is more like a reed shaken by the vacillating and changing winds of impulse, or like a boat tossed to and fro on the surging billows of impetuosity. At least this is the picture we get from the gospel narratives. And yet for all that it is upon the rock-like certitude of faith in Jesus Christ as confessed by Peter that the disciples of all ages may build until the end of time. Though it looked for a time as if the forces of a hostile world might crush this man of rock, he will not give up the battle but struggle on, rising to his feet after every blow, for has he not been assured by the Master that He has prayed for him that his faith might not fail him?

The day following this interview Jesus decided to return to Galilee. As the four disciples, above mentioned, were also Galilæans, they probably decided to go with Him. Whether or not they had already left the fords of Jordan, where they had been baptized by John, when Jesus met Philip, cannot be determined. At any rate Jesus, on meeting Philip, who was a fellow-townsman of Andrew and Peter, said to him, "Follow Me." That this was no mere invitation to join Him on the journey is clear from New Testament usage. In the Gospels these words are gener-

ally equivalent to a call to become a disciple, and they are always addressed, with but two exceptions, to those who afterwards became apostles. Philip's readiness to follow Jesus, which is tacitly assumed in the narrative, may be due in part to his acquaintance with Andrew and Peter, whose enthusiasm for their new Master was so great that they could not help speaking of Him to their friends and acquaintances, though certainly the heart-piercing look of Jesus must be regarded as the chief cause which led Philip to come to a decision. Thus the foundation is laid for his becoming one of the disciples who later became the permanent followers of Jesus. Now that Philip had seen Jesus Himself he too must share the joyful news with others. The same feeling that prompted Andrew to seek his brother Simon, now prompts Philip to tell the good news to one of his friends, for to see Jesus is to become a missionary. It appears that he suddenly thought of an old acquaintance of his, named Nathanael, also called Bartholomew, that is, the son of Tolmai, who was in the neighbourhood, it seems, and so, leaving Jesus for awhile, he went to his friend and said, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see."

Philip, it will be noted, was a good student of the Old Testament; he was familiar with the prophetic allusions to the Messiah. He informs his friend that he and the other disciples are convinced that the promised Messiah of Hebrew prophecy has at last been found in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, generally spoken of as the son of Joseph, because He had been reared in his home. Philip may have mentioned the name of the Nazarene builder and contractor, assuming that Nathanael, who hailed from the nearby town of Cana, may have heard of this name before.

If that was his motive Philip, who lived at a greater distance from Nazareth, certainly had no idea that the mere mention of Nazareth would arouse the antagonism of the prejudiced villager from Cana of Galilee. When told that the Messiah had been found in the Nazarene, he said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Did he ask this question because Nazareth did not enjoy a very good reputation, or did it grow out of jealousy, such as is sometimes found among the inhabitants of two rival towns in close proximity to each other? Was he voicing the opinion of the people of Judæa who despised the Galilæans in general, or was he prejudiced against the people of a nearby village and saying, Surely a distinguished personage like the Messiah can never come from an insignificant place like Nazareth! Philip, on the basis of his recent experience, does not stop to argue the point. He knows of a far better solution of the difficulty, which is summed up in his laconic reply, "Come and see."

Philip's answer, made familiar to him perhaps through the lips of Andrew and John, to whom the same admonition had been addressed by Jesus Himself, is the best answer to all Christian inquiry. To arrive at Christ by a process of reasoning may be well enough as far as it goes, but an appeal to personal experience is in many cases far more convincing. Nathanael is to hold his doubts in abeyance until he can convince himself by a personal interview with Jesus. His prejudice, like most prejudices, had a poor foundation, for it implies an exaggerated estimate of the power of social influence. If a lily can grow on a dunghill, so can the Messiah come out of Nazareth, no matter what may be the reputation of the Nazarenes. He is soon to learn that the best cure for ill-founded prejudice is to come and see Jesus. But be it said to Nathanael's lasting credit that in spite of his doubts and prejudices, he is willing to be instructed and have them removed; he is

open to conviction and in this way shows his guilelessness and sincerity of heart. He takes his friend's advice and goes with him. Jesus, seeing him approach, turns to those about Him and says of him, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" But as Nathanael asks Him, how it came that He knew him, Jesus replies, "Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." In contrast with the many Israelites, who claimed descent from Israel, Nathanael is in reality what the name Israel signifies and what one should expect from a real Israelite. Spiritually he is a true descendant of his illustrious ancestor; he is a genuine Israelite and not merely one in name. He is a true "prince of God" who, prior to Philip's visit, had been engaged in spiritual exercises under cover of a fig tree, wrestling with God in prayer and pouring out to his Maker the deepest longings of his soul.

To those standing about Jesus as Nathanael arrives on the scene, the word "guile," in the connection in which Jesus uses it, would suggest the subtilty and deceit of Jacob before he became Israel (Gen. 25:30-33; 27:5-36; 30:37-43; 32:27-29). That he is without guile implies that here is a son, not of Jacob, but of Israel. The shady fig tree with its dense leafy foliage was his Peniel where he found God in agonizing prayer. Jacob, the supplanter and trickster, is now gone and the man of princely character remains. What he was praying and thinking about is not stated. Was he meditating upon the Messianic hope of the nation and praying that God would soon lead him to the Messiah, whose coming the Baptist had already announced? Nathanael, at any rate, sees in this reference to his devotional life that Jesus had read the very secret of his heart and knew what his thoughts had been under the fig tree. He accepts Jesus' statement as an evidence of supernatural knowledge and forthwith all his doubts and

prejudices disappear. Perceiving that the depths of his soul lay open before the spiritual eye of Jesus, he who had come to the Searcher of hearts with mockery upon his lips, confesses Him to be "the Son of God" and "the King of Israel." While as yet Nathanael's conception of Israel's Messianic King still breathes the political atmosphere of the nation's theocratic hopes, Jesus receives the earnest and sincere confession with joyous surprise at the ready belief of the guileless Israelite of Cana, informing him at the same time that henceforth he and the other disciples would witness far greater demonstrations of power from on high. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Evidently these words, although directed in the first instance to Nathanael, were addressed to a plurality of persons. Inferentially some, if not all, of Christ's newly gained adherents were also present on this occasion. They are given to understand that the public ministry of the Messiah is a binding link between heaven and earth, and that out of the opened heavens the ascending and descending angels of God will bring to Him whatever powers may be necessary for the completion of His Messianic work. The "opened heaven" and the ascending and descending angels are an accommodation to the theme of Nathanael's meditation. It is quite unlikely that "the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" are to be taken in a literal sense. Scripture does speak of angels ministering to Jesus at critical moments in His earthly ministry, but nowhere, except at the Ascension, are the disciples said to have seen them. The "from henceforth" of verse 51 and the Ascension would make a rather long

gap between the beginning of Christ's public ministry and the literal fulfilment of these words. Even if some or all of the disciples had been witnesses to such appearances it is hardly likely that they literally saw "the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." But we do not wish to press the point. All that we want to note in this connection is that the language of verse fifty-one was borrowed from Jacob's dream at Bethel. When he fled from home and country, the forlorn traveller, laying his head upon a stone as a pillow for the night, saw heaven opened and "the angels of God ascending and descending" upon a ladder reaching from earth to heaven. To the awaking patriarch the ladder and the ascending and descending angels were tokens of God's uninterrupted protection. With these ministering spirits about him he can face the future and take courage. The permanent religious significance of this passage is expressed with profound insight and truth in John 1 : 51, where the dream of Jacob finds its highest fulfilment in the unique Son of man. Henceforth the visionary ladder of the patriarch is swept away by the dawn of the Messianic era with its uninterrupted and perpetual intercourse between heaven and earth, God and the Messiah being in constant communion with each other. From now on access to heaven is far more direct than if Jacob's ladder still spanned the very heavens and God's ministering angels were walking up and down in a visible form.

"The Son of man," alluded to in our verse, calls for a word of explanation. In Ezekiel, "Son of man" is a title given to the prophet by Jehovah to remind him of his mortal frame. In the Psalms this phrase has reference to the ideal man, or man as God intended him to be. "The Son of man" in John 1 : 51 corresponds with "the Son of man" in the night visions of Daniel 7 : 13-14, where "One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven and

came to the Ancient of days and there was given Him dominion and glory and a kingdom that all people, nations and languages should serve Him." In the four Gospels it is a title of the Messiah. Here in our passage it points both to the humanity and Messiahship of Jesus, the unique Son of man, who forges an eternal link between heaven and earth, between God and man.

From the more formal call of the four disciples, mentioned in Matthew 4: 18-22 and Mark 1: 16-20, we learn that the newly gained converts, who had met Jesus in the manner described in the first chapter of the Fourth Gospel, returned to their homes in Galilee, resuming their usual occupations until such time as the Master should wish them to become His personal followers and constant companions. That time came, as we are told in Matthew 4: 12-13, after John's imprisonment, which was the signal for the commencement of the first Galilæan ministry with Capernaum by the seaside as the centre of future operations and the ordinary place of abode. The voice in the wilderness is now hushed in the oppressive silence of a cell, but with the going down of a prophetic star of the first magnitude the " Great Light " of a new-born day had already reached the zenith of unsurpassed power and unapproachable splendour. As previously pointed out, Jesus began His ministry in Galilee with the proclamation of the kingdom of God, saying, " The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe " the good tidings of the kingdom's near approach (Mark 1: 14-15). In all likelihood a considerable interval elapsed between the disciples' first acquaintance with Jesus in the vicinity of the Jordan and the present call to permanent discipleship, to which your attention is now invited.

Somewhere in between the first interview of John 1 and the present call must be placed Jesus' preliminary ministry in Judæa, following which He returns to Galilee, while the

sons of Jona and of Zebedee fall back again into the routine of secular life. Toward the close of the Baptist's career and shortly before His first appearance in the synagogue at Capernaum, Jesus, walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, finds the two pairs of brothers occupied with their daily tasks. According to the parallel accounts of Matthew and Mark, Simon and Andrew were actually engaged in fishing when they received their call. The very act of casting a big net into the sea suggested to the mind of Jesus that other kind of fishing in which He was so intensely interested. He immediately calls to them with a loud voice, summoning them to share the blessed privilege of constant companionship with the supreme Fisher of men, in order that they might be able to spread the net of the gospel over a sea of imperishable souls, first over the sea of His own nation and then over a boundless, world-embracing sea of human hearts and lives. "And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after Me," literally, "Hither! after Me! and I will make you to become fishers of men." The expression, "Come ye after Me," is a conventional way of saying, "Be My disciples," and grew out of the custom of allowing precedence to the rabbi, while walking along the street. "Be My followers and I will make you to become fishers of men. I shall prepare you for work of a spiritual character and teach you to wield another kind of net than that which ye are casting into the lake, so that ye may be able to catch men for God."

What an apt figure of speech, taken from the domain of fishing, conveying the thought that if the fishermen of Bethsaida followed Jesus He would employ them to gather men in the net of the gospel and land them on the shores of the divine kingdom! This was no temporary invitation, as in John 1, to follow Jesus for awhile. The two men readily understood that there was implied in the summons, a definite call to become permanent disciples of Jesus.

According to New Testament usage, "to follow Jesus" is a figurative expression for discipleship involving personal attendance upon the great Teacher. From what they had already learned of Him, either from previous conversations or during the Judæan ministry, these fishermen knew that they were to exchange a lower for a higher calling and what sort of work was in store for them. They were to accompany Jesus constantly and learn the art, so to speak, of catching the souls of men for the kingdom of God. Jesus, it will be remembered, spent a large part of His earthly ministry drawing choice souls into the net of divine truth that He might train and fit them to catch others, for the work of fishing in the sea of this world required many hands and He was not willing to be alone in His great work. At this stage of Christ's ministry it was imperative that the kingdom of the Messiah be founded on the rock of deep and indestructible convictions in the minds of a small inner circle of believers, not on the shifting sands of superficial impressions on the minds of the multitude. As yet that inner circle is too small. Shall the Master go to nearby Tiberias and augment His numbers by calling some of the polished courtiers belonging to the retinue of the Galilæan tetrarch? Or shall He repair to the Judæan capital and seek out the learned but hair-splitting and logic-chopping lawyers and senators or the strutting, sanctimonious-looking, petrified Pharisees in the Jewish Sanhedrin?

We are soon to learn that the "whited sepulchres" in Jerusalem and the fox-like courtiers from Herod's palace are to have no place in that circle. Jesus is looking for men with a spiritual capacity, who are willing to grow mentally, morally and spiritually. He is looking for learners with an open, receptive mind and heart, who had to some extent at least been schooled and disciplined by their daily routine on the lake, which was well fitted to promote

vigour of body and a certain independence of spirit, so necessary in the present instance. It was among the humble, truth-seeking, sincere-minded fishermen in open, sunny-faced Galilee that Jesus called the apostolic pathfinders of His kingdom. He selected these men, not so much for what they were, but for what they were yet to be. For the moment they are only masses of latent capabilities, full of meaning to no eye but His. To be sure, the men He had chosen are far from ideal. They are far from finished products, as is quite apparent from the fact that Jesus did not call them with any idea of sending them out immediately as fishers of men, but merely promised to train them to become such, provided they would follow Him in all His wanderings and serve a sufficiently long apprenticeship as learners of the spiritual art of fishing for men's souls. And yet they and others, who are about to be called, will be more docile and pliable in the hands of the great Master-Teacher than the prejudiced and stereotyped minds of men of high degree. Such men are to be found among the fishermen of Bethsaida and their companions. Going on a little farther with the disciples thus gained, Jesus suddenly comes within sight of the sons of Zebedee, sitting in a boat repairing their nets. "And straightway He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him." They were directed to follow the Master that they might listen to His teaching and observe His mighty works, that they might be qualified for the work to which they were called. Henceforth they are to regard their old employment as emblematic of the higher calling to which they were now summoned. To them the call means a promotion from the secular to the spiritual. The spiritual import of the call will soon become quite clear to them by what they are about to witness on the lake.

That they are to collect men into a Christian community

by means of a spiritual net is abundantly illustrated by the miraculous draught of fishes, described in Luke 5:1-11. Their faith in Jesus is wonderfully stimulated by it. This buoyancy of faith lent enthusiasm to the actual work of fishing for men's souls which was to follow. But before we proceed it may be well to draw your attention to several points of difference in Luke's account from that of Matthew and Mark. In the latter, Jesus finds the two pairs of brothers in their respective boats, while in the former the two boats are empty, the fishermen having gone out of them to wash their nets after a night of fruitless toil. According to Matthew and Mark, Simon and Andrew received their call, presumably early in the morning, as they were casting their net into the sea. James and John, on the other hand, had ceased fishing and were repairing their nets, when they were called. Matthew and Mark speak of two calls addressed successively and independently to the men in each boat, while in the former, that is, in Luke's account, Jesus addresses Peter alone (v. 10), although there can be no doubt from the result, alluded to in the eleventh verse, that the words addressed to Simon included his partners also. Of the first four disciples, mentioned in the parallel accounts of Matthew and Mark, Luke makes no reference whatsoever to Andrew, but it is more than likely that he and his brother were in the boat, in which Jesus sat when He was teaching the people.

In Matthew and Mark, Jesus definitely calls the fishermen to a higher sphere of activity, inviting them to follow Him in His wanderings, so that He might instruct, teach, prepare them for their future calling. Luke, on the other hand, says nothing of a call, presupposing a period of instruction and preparation before the promised vocation can be undertaken in real earnest. In place of a promise looking to future participation in a spiritual sphere, we

have the assurance of what looks like almost immediate co-operation in fishing for men's souls. Speaking to Peter, Jesus says, "From now on thou shalt take men alive." This presupposes that the period of preparation, referred to in both Matthew and Mark, had already begun, for the actual work of casting the net of the gospel over the sea of Jewish and Gentile life lies in immediate prospect. Other points of difference in the two accounts will be noted as we proceed with Luke's narrative. The only reason for identifying this narrative with the well-known account of Matthew and Mark is the fact that other disciples besides Peter "left all and followed Jesus." But there is no reason why those of His disciples who lived in Capernaum, like Peter and Andrew, James and John, should not spend an occasional night on the lake for the sake of supporting, by their own efforts, both themselves and some of their relatives in the city, who may not have been as affluent as the father of the sons of Zebedee.

Possibly the best proof that Luke 5:1-11 points to a later period in Christ's ministry than the account in Matthew and Mark is the eager multitude that had assembled on the shore of the lake to hear Him preach. In Matthew and Mark, as previously noted, Jesus begins His Galilæan ministry soon after the Baptist's arrest. Prior to His first appearance as a Teacher in the synagogue at Capernaum we find Him walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, obviously all alone until He meets Simon and Andrew, James and John, calling each pair of brothers successively to permanent discipleship, while in Luke He is already surrounded by pressing throngs eagerly listening to His preaching before He becomes aware of the two empty boats and their former occupants a short distance away. From the preceding chapter of Luke's account, not to speak of other passages in Matthew and Mark, it appears that Jesus began His Messianic activity in Galilee by

preaching in the synagogues, subsequently transferring, upon occasion, His preaching activity to the great out-of-doors, and there meet popularity as best He can. Jesus' preaching in the synagogue at Capernaum and elsewhere, accompanied as it was in many cases by most remarkable demonstrations of His healing power, seems to lie in the past. The synagogues have now become too small for His audiences. A rising tide of popularity has swept through the countryside, bringing to this particular spot in large numbers the inhabitants of nearby towns, like Capernaum and Bethsaida.

Surrounded on all sides by a dense throng and seeking a point of vantage, where His voice will command a wider range of listeners than the narrow coast line will permit, He enters one of two boats, drawn up on the shore, requesting the owner thereof to "put out a little from the land," in order that He might preach to the multitude from the boat. Having thrown the net of the Gospel over His hearers on the shore, He turns, at the conclusion of the discourse, to Peter, the owner of the boat, saying, "Put out into the deep," and then, addressing a plurality of persons, He adds, "and let down your nets for a draught." In addition to Simon there must have been one or more fishermen in the same vessel whose assistance would be required in letting down the nets, and hence the change from the singular to the plural imperative. But what could be the object of a command like this, which was certainly not in line with Peter's experience as a fisherman. Had he not worked in vain the previous night, when fishing could be carried on more successfully than in broad daylight? That the command went directly against his own experience is evident from the reply of the perplexed and baffled fisherman. "Master," he says with becoming reverence, "we toiled all night and took nothing." Does the experienced fisherman feel hurt at the idea of

being told to go and try again in the morning, especially after he and his partners had already toiled to no purpose at a far more suitable time for fishing? Still, though appearances may be against it, he will do as requested out of respect for the Master's work, thereby subordinating his will to the will of his Superior. Whatever his own thoughts and doubts may be as to the wisdom of the present undertaking, he will merge all these in the word of command which has been spoken; he cannot withhold obedience. This act of obedience was rewarded by an extraordinary take, "And they inclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their nets were breaking; and they beckoned unto their partners in the other boat, that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink" to the water's edge.

To the men in the two boats the astonishing draught that Jesus had brought about seemed nothing short of miraculous. They were utterly amazed at the result. Simon, especially, was completely overwhelmed by what had taken place. The fishermen were amazed because the intervening waters between the shore and the deepest part of the lake did not prevent Jesus from knowing where such a multitude of fishes could be found. Apparently they were little prepared for the wonderful draught, every indication pointing in that direction being absent, so it seems. Some of you may have heard of Tristram's *Natural History of the Bible,* which speaks in a certain place (page 285) of great shoals of fish, an acre or more in extent, manifesting themselves at times in the Sea of Galilee. But this natural phenomenon will not explain the amazement of these experienced fishermen. While it would be entirely unnecessary to look upon the draught of fishes in the present instance as a miracle of creation, so far as Christ's relation to it is concerned, we are fully justified in affirming that it was a miracle of knowledge

in the sense that Jesus gave the direction at a time when the fish were within reach, thereby showing His command of all the circumstances. A mass of fish in one spot on the lake was not unprecedented, nor even strange perhaps. But if a shoal of fish had made its appearance on the surface of the lake within sight of those listening to Jesus preaching, the trained eye of the fishermen would have been among the first to detect it. But we read of nothing of the sort. However, we do read that they are commanded to put out a considerable distance from the shore, where the sea had its greatest depth, and then to let down the nets for a draught.

It is significant to note that Peter cannot comply before telling Jesus of their night of fruitless toil. Obviously the likelihood of success by making another venture at this time of day is not very great. Peter, at all events, is not very optimistic or enthusiastic about it. Possibly this explains to some extent why Peter fell down at Jesus' knees confessing his sin. "Depart from me," he says, "for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" The marvellous success of what looked like a very doubtful experiment brought to him a vivid realization of the sinful spirit he had been indulging. His compliance with Christ's command now stands revealed as the result of but partial obedience. Of course, he did as requested, but not before calling attention to his previous experience. After all, Jesus knew better than he did, experienced fisherman that he was. He now began to feel that if Jesus' knowledge of the whereabouts of the multitude of fishes they had caught suffered no impairment by the intervening waters, He would certainly know of the sin he had been harbouring in his heart. He feels guilty, for he is sure that Jesus can see through him, to the very bottom of his heart and read his sinful thoughts. Presently there leaps from his lips a cry of remorse. He experiences a profound sense of his un-

worthiness to be the disciple and messenger of such a Lord. Hitherto he might speak of Jesus as the "Master," whose orders must be respected (v. 5). But now he is absolutely convinced that the Teacher he has been following is more than a mere rabbi, and he becomes conscience-stricken at the presence of a holy divine power. This new revelation of Christ's power was the best revelation of his sinful self Peter had had up to this time, and he recognizes in Jesus the "Lord," whose holiness causes moral agony to the sinner. The consciousness of sin creates in Peter's mind the feeling of an infinite distance existing between him and Christ. Powerfully impressed with the superhuman knowledge thus revealed, he regards Jesus for the moment as a supernatural being, whose presence fills him with terror. He perceives that he is in the presence of one in whom there is divine power. The revelation of the power and holiness of Jesus and the consciousness of his sinful condition causes him to fear the approach of One who must be more than a mere mortal and, prostrating himself at the feet of Jesus, he exclaims with characteristic candour, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

Peter's self-humiliation and repentance in the face of such a revelation is unfeigned, thus reminding us of a somewhat similar experience in connection with the call of Isaiah to prophetic service. But, as in the case of Isaiah, this consciousness of sin is a necessary preparation for his lifework. He now learns that the consciousness of his sinful condition is not to be a permanent disqualification for service in the Messianic kingdom; it can be removed. The fears of the terrified disciple are allayed by the assuring and comforting words, "Fear not; from now on thou shalt take men alive." Thus the real purpose of the enormous "take" is revealed. It is not a miracle which is to meet some urgent physical need, but to throw

light upon Peter's future activity in the kingdom and upon his relation to it. The large draught of fishes is a prophetic symbol of the marvellous success which in the near future shall attend his efforts in behalf of the kingdom of God. It was needed for the qualifying of the disciples, and especially Peter, who had been called to be fishers of men. To fish for men, as Peter now learns, requires persistent effort, but his patience must not abate, even when there is every semblance of "the night and nothing"; let him remember that he will achieve his greatest success in fullest reliance upon the efficacy of the Master's command. He and his helpers are to become fishers of men, and catch men instead of fish, not by killing them, as fish expire when taken from their native element; they are to take them alive and keep them alive for life eternal. Their business, therefore, is to be with men—living, rational men with immortal souls. They are not to gain a living by the death of God's creatures but to win men for God, nor for selfish ends but through love. Unlike fish that are caught in the net and killed in the catching, the precious lives of men are to be rescued, by means of the net of the gospel, from the stagnant waters of worldliness and transplanted into the kingdom of God. To take men alive is to save them by taking them out of an element which stifles and destroys the inner life and draw them, by the constraints of truth and love, within the Messiah's kingdom.

The object of this higher art is to bring to men the larger and the more abundant life. It is to lead men to Jesus who is the true life of men. Jesus who so delights in giving object-lessons to His disciples uses the present incident as an illustration of future success in a spiritual sphere. Having grasped the spiritual meaning of their recent experience, "they left all—their home, kindred, employment, nets, boats, means of subsistence, everything —and followed Jesus, consecrating, without reserve, their

entire personality, along with all the patience, perseverance and courage which they had acquired at their toil, to nobler service when, as fishers of men, they would cast the net of evangelical truth into the restless, dreary sea of life, hauling ashore, as it were, in the boat of the Christian community of believers, a great multitude of believing souls. The commercial value of a multitude of fishes has no further charm, and having reached the shore they abandon their former employment and follow Jesus. The line of present duty is plain enough. Though the humble fishermen of Galilee still have much to learn of what to them is a new and untried art, much may be expected of men who could leave all for Christ. We admire their devotion to Jesus which made them capable of any sacrifice. With all their imperfections these fishermen, trained as they were by the greatest Teacher the world has ever seen, became successful fishers of men, through whose influence countless multitudes have been gathered into the net of the gospel. But we are anticipating. We now come to the call of Matthew, the tax-gatherer.

The call of Matthew is described with minor variations in the parallel accounts of Matthew 9:9-13, Mark 2:13-17 and Luke 5:27-32. In all three accounts it follows the healing of a paralytic in Capernaum, although it is not absolutely necessary to take the two as closely consecutive. Mark, it appears, separates this incident in point of time from the preceding narrative. At all events, sufficient time elapses for a great multitude to gather on the shore of the lake to hear Jesus preach. Mark 2:13 relates that Jesus went out again to the seaside, "and all the multitude resorted to Him and He taught them." The Greek words for "resorted" and "taught" are in the imperfect tense. This use of the imperfect implies that the people continued coming to Him in ever-increasing numbers just as they had done in Capernaum, and He went on teaching them as

they came. And the "again" of our verse points to the call of the four disciples which is the only previous event at the lakeside. Following the call of the four fishermen, recorded in Mark 1:16-20 and Matthew 4:18-22, Jesus went on a tour through Galilee, returning after a week's absence to Capernaum where, to the amazement of the people, the paralytic was restored to normal health. Jesus, it will be recalled, forgives the man's sins, thus removing the cause which produced the disease. The protest of the scribes against what they considered an act of blasphemy on the part of Jesus falls on deaf ears. The charge of blasphemy in the face of such a remarkable cure was no barrier to Christ's growing popularity, as may be seen from the success of His lakeside preaching. He simply could not escape the eager crowd that followed Him to the shore of the lake, whither He had gone after proving His claim to forgive sins by curing the paralytic.

Can it be possible that Levi, the tax-gatherer, could have been ignorant of what had transpired in the vicinity? It is hardly likely, for Matthew the publican was too alert for that. By this time Jesus had been preaching and teaching long enough to call the attention of men to Himself. His manner of teaching which differed so widely from the traditional methods of the scribes and Pharisees, together with the attack recently directed against Him in connection with the cure of the paralytic, must have made Jesus the most talked of personality in the vicinity. Murmuring scribes and Pharisees could not prevent the multitudes from resorting to Him, least of all the toll-gatherers in the vicinity, who had been excommunicated by the religious authorities of the day. The people confided in the evidence of their experience which never saw it on this fashion. The Man of Galilee was so different from anyone they had ever heard, the force of His personality and His broad human sympathies seemed to draw men to Him,

with the possible exception of the supercilious Pharisees who came only to criticize and to find fault. Among the people who came to hear Him as He taught by the seaside were men of all classes. We do not know whether Levi, the tax-gatherer, heard Jesus preach on this occasion or not. But considering the locality, it may be assumed that he had some knowledge of Jesus and His message before he was called. In all probability he had heard some of His discourses or had witnessed some of the mighty deeds which the great Teacher performed. At all events there must have been ample opportunity to see Jesus on more than one occasion, since He had been in the community once before (compare Mark 1:16). The publican, like others of his class, doubtless listened to Jesus, whenever the opportunity presented itself. Whatever others may think of him as a publican, the duties of a man who was looked upon as an apostate from the national faith and hope, cannot altogether obscure the deeper longings of his soul after higher things. He is not the type of man who would miss the opportunity of seeing and hearing the most popular man in all Galilee, all the more so in those days when the scene of Jesus' teaching and preaching activities had changed from the synagogue to the familiar surroundings at the lakeside, with its numerous boats and fishermen plying their trade. Nearby was the busy highway of eastern commerce, since Capernaum was on the road leading from Damascus to the Mediterranean.

This road ran along the northern end of the Sea of Galilee and crossing the border-line between the tetrarchy of Philip and the territory of Herod Antipas, it turned thence, northwards and westwards, uniting with the Upper Galilæan road which terminated at Acre along the Mediterranean seaboard. Capernaum was a busy frontier town of considerable importance, situated at the fork of great roads, which diverged and led to Jerusalem, to Da-

mascus, to Tyre and to Sepphoris. The presence of a rather large number of custom house officers in Capernaum is accounted for by the fact that the town was situated on the borders of the territory of Herod Antipas. These men were entrusted with the highly unpopular task of collecting customs and dues on goods passing in and out of the above-mentioned territory. With Cæsar's permission the customs at Capernaum were levied for Herod Antipas, much of whose income came from this source of revenue. There must have been a tax-office of considerable importance outside the city by the lake. One of these toll-gatherers was Levi, who was not a Roman official but a sub-tax-collector, either directly in the employ of the reigning prince or of a tax-contractor, who had purchased for a certain amount the right of collecting the taxes in this district. From the synoptic narrative we learn that Jesus found him sitting at his toll-booth, presumably in the act of levying dues from his fellow-countrymen who, by reason of their religious prerogatives and theocratic hopes, frowned on the very idea of paying taxes to a prince, whose authority in Galilee depended entirely upon the goodwill of a heathen conqueror claiming rights and privileges which belonged to none other but Jehovah, the God of Israel. And yet, for reasons of His own, Jesus, at the conclusion of His lakeside discourse, invites this representative of a despised class to join the inner circle of His disciples. "And as He passed by He saw Levi, the son of Alphæus, sitting at the toll-house and He saith unto him, Follow Me."

In the parallel accounts of the call, the new disciple bears two names. Mark and Luke speak of him as Levi, the name by which he was known before he was called, while in Matthew 9:9, where the same event is told in almost identical language, Levi is identified with Matthew, the name by which he was known as an apostle and member of

the Christian community. Why Levi the toll-gatherer should be called Matthew, "The gift of Jehovah," is not stated. Possibly Jesus, perceiving the direct hand of God in this event, gave him the surname of Matthew as a reminder of his new calling. A change of name in the present instance, pointing to a change in heart and life, would be very acceptable to a despised tax-gatherer, who had grown weary of his hateful occupation. It did not take him long to make up his mind to accept the Master's invitation. The plain, direct invitation, "Follow Me," addressed to him in the form of an imperative, is equivalent to a summons to permanent discipleship involving, as in the case of the first disciples, personal attendance on the great Teacher whose constant follower he was to be. "Follow Me" as your spiritual Master and I will fit you for service in the kingdom of heaven. Become one of My intimate disciples and, instead of writing down on a sheet of parchment the amount of revenue you collected from a reluctant population, you will one day be able to pen a faithful record of your Master's life and teachings, which will be eagerly read and studied by the subjects of the King of kings. Little did he dream that he was destined to become the writer of a treatise which stands first in the New Testament and which has been more widely circulated and read than any other composition written by man. He obeys the call and immediately becomes a follower of Jesus. In Luke 5:28 we read, "And he forsook all, rose up and followed Him."

The line of cleavage between the lucrative post of a greedy tax-collector and the present call to discipleship is clear-cut and distinct. In one sense his response to the call of Jesus was a greater act of faith than that of the first four disciples. By becoming a disciple he burns, as it were, his bridges behind him. An occasional excursion to some profitable toll-booth for the sake of supplementing

his income is impossible. For him there is to be no occasional fishing trip while the Master is tarrying in Capernaum; for him it is a case of "the night and nothing." From the standpoint of material gain he had more to lose than the Galilæan fishermen. To give up his lucrative post in the tax-office argues the utmost confidence in Jesus and His mission. A man of his practical bent of mind certainly knew that he risked everything by following Jesus. He also knew full well that in the event of failure it would be exceedingly hard for an ex-toll-gatherer to find any other employment among a people who regarded a Hebrew publican as a renegade Jew. Whether he as a young man could live in such an event on the means which he had already acquired is uncertain. That he had some means is evident from the feast he prepared in Christ's honour, but this in itself does not argue great wealth. However this may be, the call of Jesus finds him inwardly prepared for the outward surrender that he makes, and he makes the sacrifice gladly and cheerfully. He is not concerned about temporal rewards, like the Galilæan scribe, who came to Jesus saying, "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest."

But Jesus reminds the man of the hardships of discipleship, incidental to a life of continuous wandering. Evidently the man had been accustomed to an easy life and hence the admonition. A warning of this sort was unnecessary in the case of Matthew. We are quite sure that the publican was not selected solely for his readiness in wielding a pen; in that case, the scribe would have been a better selection. Matthew was chosen as a member of the apostolic band because of his spiritual preparedness for the duties of discipleship. Jesus, we are told, fixed His eyes upon him and being satisfied with the man's qualifications, He selected him as a constant companion. The call was as swiftly obeyed as that of the Galilæan fishermen.

The call of the latter, as we know, is narrated with equal abruptness in the synoptic account, since the Evangelists were interested in the call itself rather than in the disciples' previous acquaintance with Jesus. The information that the four disciples were well acquainted with Jesus when they were called is incidentally supplied in the Fourth Gospel by one of the eye-witnesses himself. The Synoptists concerned themselves only about the crisis in the lives of these men, passing over in silence all details bearing on the preparatory stages of the call itself.

While there is no information of any previous acquaintance such as might prepare Matthew for immediate compliance with Christ's command, it is absolutely certain that the tax-gatherer of Capernaum, like the sons of Jona and of Zebedee, knew something of Jesus before he was called. A man forsaking a profitable calling in order to follow Christ would find a way to make His acquaintance or listen to His teaching. Doubtless he had been powerfully affected by His preaching and healing activity. Of the two, Christ's teaching must have had the greater effect upon the publican. Ordinarily men cannot be startled into faith by miraculous deeds, for the man who cannot believe without signs and wonders is ever prone to explain away the supernatural by forcing it into the all-inclusive mould of secondary causes. A miracle in and of itself cannot produce that faith which Jesus demands, otherwise the people of Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. Levi's faith in Jesus was more than mere astonishment; it was a deep-seated faith rooted in his inmost being. Christ's teaching about a loving Father who is ready to forgive every repentant child of His, touched his heart and was now beginning to change the whole course of his life. While others kept on wondering and talking about the mighty Healer, he began to

repent of his past life, preferring the kingdom of heaven and its rewards to the temporary rewards of an iniquitous system of taxation. Would it be too much to assume that Levi may have been among the many toll-gatherers who had listened to the stern message of John the Baptist, admonishing them to avoid the besetting sin of avarice and unbrotherliness? At any rate, he now abhorred the old life with all its heartlessness, selfishness and greed. The voice of Jesus, it seems, had penetrated his heart. Did Jesus that day, when He fixed His eyes upon him as if to study his character, discover what had taken place? His instantaneous response to the call proves that he no longer had his eye on the shekels of a lucrative position, but on something higher. The call of Jesus probably brought to a crisis and decision thoughts which were already beginning to take shape in Levi's mind.

Levi-Matthew seeks to impart his new-found joy to others by inviting his former associates to a feast given by him in Christ's honour in the hope that other members of the same class might be led to follow his new Master. "And Levi made Him a great feast in his house, and many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and His disciples." It was a jubilee feast commemorative of his emancipation from constant temptation to rapacious injustice. The joy of a new freedom and the beautiful prospect of a life of fellowship with Jesus prompts him, with the characteristic zeal of a young disciple, to induce others to follow his example and exchange the old life with its crooked paths and pitfalls for the straight path of gospel truth. As a first missionary effort the ex-publican seeks to bring his old friends and Jesus together. But the preparations for such a festal gathering would take a little time. It is unnecessary to assume, therefore, that the celebration of this decisive change in Matthew's life took place the same day he was called. The exact date of the call

can only be approximated, owing to the nature of the evidence. However, it is certain that it preceded the choosing of the twelve apostles and the Sermon on the Mount. From the context itself we gather that it followed the call of the first four disciples and that Jesus had been teaching long enough to arouse the antagonism of the Jewish hierarchy. The first conflict occurred in connection with the healing of the paralytic. The banquet in the house of Levi occasioned a second conflict. But the scribes and the Pharisees, fresh from their discomfiture about the paralytic, prefer to aim their attack this time at the disciples, whom they could approach with greater freedom, possibly hoping to intimidate them with a show of authority and superior technical knowledge in matters of religion and social etiquette. "When they saw that He was eating with the sinners and publicans, they said unto His disciples, He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners!" In Matthew 9:11 this emphatic statement in Mark's account is put in the form of a question. According to Luke 5:30, members of the Pharisaic party "murmured against His disciples saying, Why do ye eat and drink with the publicans and sinners?"

The ecclesiastical authorities in Capernaum, belonging to the Pharisaic order which had its seat in Jerusalem, sought to discredit Jesus in the eyes of His disciples by making sinister reflections about Him and the motly gathering in the house of a despised publican. Misinterpreting His motives and questioning His prophetic authority, they deemed it their duty to watch His doings as they watched those of the stern preacher of repentance in the Jordan Valley. They objected to His methods and His way of doing things. They took exception to recent developments. We noticed how, at the healing of the paralytic, they protested against what they regarded as an act of blasphemy. The pronouncement of absolution upon a sin-

ful paralytic is succeeded by the selection of a tax-collector for a religious mission, that is to say, of a man beyond the pale of the legal requirements, and whose sins were looked upon as a barrier to repentance. How strange that Jesus should call a publican! The poor fishermen whom He had chosen were not the kind of men the average rabbi would have selected to follow him in the capacity of a learner. The proud scribes and Pharisees possibly ridiculed the choice but, then, the Galilæan fishermen, though untutored and unskilled in technical details, were honest, loyal, law-abiding Israelites. But here is Levi! What teacher would think of asking a man so odious to the people by reason of his unpopular office at the lakeside to become a disciple! And that is what Jesus did! And then to think of it, He rejected the scribe who offered to follow Him and called the publican! But that is not all! Not satisfied with calling one of the toll-gatherers, He consorts with them as a class by eating and drinking with the publicans of Capernaum and their associates in the house of Matthew.

From the point of view of men who set the standard for the whole country, this was a public violation of acknowledged Jewish propriety and decorum. The social and religious barriers existing between the Pharisees and the members of such a hated calling render it unlikely that the former would enter the house of a tax-collector, although, according to eastern custom, a person could enter a house during a meal and actually take part in the conversation without sharing in the food. We can hardly conceive that these dignified teachers would push their way into the open court of the house as uninvited spectators and look on out of curiosity while a meal was in progress at a tax-collector's house. They would not contaminate themselves by such proximity. Possibly Christ's watchful opponents seeing from a distance a large number of guests approaching the ex-publican's house at meal-time, waited for the

guests to disperse before remonstrating with the disciples about the impropriety of accepting the hospitality of publicans and sinners. No rabbi would do such a thing. The criticism was calculated to discredit Jesus in the eyes of the disciples and to shake their confidence in His claims. Perhaps the disciples are in need of some instruction in rabbinical lore, according to which a man may incur the danger of ceremonial defilement by eating with lapsed members of the Jewish church. As orthodox Jews, they ought not to be altogether unaware of the fact that eating with publicans and Gentiles is strictly prohibited by their own rabbis and that to eat with these infamous tax-collectors is to act contrary to the religious feeling of the country, for to break bread with another is a token of mutual regard and confidence. Let them stop and consider for a moment the company they have been keeping. Do they really want to know why the Pharisees look upon the tax-gatherers as great sinners? If so, let them ponder the following considerations.

For one thing, their employment is such as to make it almost impossible for them to keep the law as the Pharisees did. As custom house officers they had to collect toll from Greek merchants crossing the frontier with their caravans on the Sabbath day. Thus they not only broke the Sabbath but also came into contact with Gentiles, instead of avoiding such contact in accordance with rabbinical rules. These backsliders hardly ever made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to the national sanctuary. Then, again, the moral side of the question is not to be overlooked. Surely they cannot be unaware of the fraudulent and extortionate methods employed by some of these unprincipled men! As every one will concede, bribes and corruption of every sort would be the natural outcome of the Roman practice of farming out the taxes to the highest bidder who frequently reimbursed himself by high-handed

methods. Such a system would make men avaricious and unscrupulous, hard and tyrannical. Hebrew publicans were regarded as little better than heathen. The tax-contractor of the district selected them because their knowledge of the people and of local conditions in general would expedite the work. As patriots, the Jews hated them with a perfect hatred because they had accepted service under tax-contractors who were responsible to a Galilæan tetrarch holding office by Cæsar's permission. This feeling was even more intense in Judæa, where the taxes were levied by publicans and paid directly to the Roman government. As a rule the publicans were more interested in their personal enrichment than in the national aspirations and consequently the Pharisees and the people in general looked down on them with scorn.

They never gave a thought, apparently, to the religious and social effects of their unpatriotic employment. So far as they were concerned, they did not scruple to break down the legal barriers of Judaism by establishing contacts with heathen tradesmen and with those who were ceremonially unclean. Contact with publicans and Gentiles; in short, with those who stood outside of religion as defined by the Pharisees, must be avoided for fear of ceremonial defilement. To eat with these "sinners," according to the same authorities, was a form of abomination of the worst type. The Pharisees, as the name itself indicates, must "separate" themselves from persons who do not keep the legal precepts of Judaism. These "separatists" and their followers believed that if Israel was to become worthy of the divine salvation it would be necessary to establish a wall of separation between a holy people and outsiders in general as a means of avoiding all contamination and transgression prohibited by law. But the holiness upon which the emphasis is placed is little short of the ceremonial holiness of a ritualistic code rather than the

ethical holiness of Hebrew prophecy. Israel is to be a nation apart from every other nation living within the cloistered security of an exclusive and stultifying legalism. Pharisaism had reduced religion to a law. While the observance of a well-defined law hedged in the nation and kept it from losing its identity after the exile, the emphasis in Pharisaic times was placed upon external performances rather than upon the internal motive or the spirit underlying it all. The appeal was to an external law code rather than to the dynamic of love to God and man. Men felt satisfied if the external act was in conformity with strict legal righteousness. Religion played around surface appearances because it failed to go to the heart of the matter. It lacked love. This is why the Pharisees, in their insistence upon legal precision, separated themselves from publicans and sinners, leaving them to their fate. In their opinion anyone not having a practical working knowledge of the law was accursed.

But Jesus had something better to propose than a religion walled up in an endless maze of legal ordinances. Turning to the sanctimonious fault-finders, who in directing their complaint to the disciples really meant to attack their Master, Jesus makes the ever-memorable reply, "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." The strong and healthy do not need a doctor, but only the sick.

Jesus applies the parable of the physician directly to Himself. As the Healer of sinners He must establish healing contacts with His patients. "My clinic," He says in effect, "is among publicans and sinners; they are sick and need healing. My patients are in the isolation hospital of Pharisaic neglect, since the doctors of My people prefer to restrict their medical practice to the lighter cases. Men labeled by these superficial doctors as incurable have been relegated either to the hospital for incurable diseases or to

the 'County Hospital' outside the camp of Israel. And the sad part of it is, they have made no provision for the medical treatment of these outcasts of society. The doctors of Judaism will have nothing to do with them. Their constant cry is, 'Unclean, unclean!' and they separate themselves, turn away, and pass by on the other side for fear of contagious contamination. And the task of treating them is left to Me alone. How My heart aches at the contemplation of their many ills! They are ill, desperately ill, and they know it. They realize their need and how glad they are to have Me in their midst! And how readily some of them respond to proper treatment! Recently one of these supposed incurables was healed of his malady and he, along with other co-workers, has now become one of My assistants in this work of mercy and loving service to lost humanity. The prospects for further cures are apparent on every hand. Look at this company of people. You have ostracised them; you have excommunicated them from the house of God, thereby restricting the 'balm of Gilead' to those who shoulder the burdens you have imposed; you will have nothing to do with them because you shun the disease which is afflicting them. But look and see how the medicine of an unadulterated gospel is beginning to work! One of the patients in the public ward of this moral and spiritual sanitarium has already repented of his sins; others are about to follow his example, and should I not have compassion upon them? Where should the Physician be but among the sick or, dropping the figure, is it not the function of a Saviour to save? Oh, it pays to be the Friend of neglected sinners! I tell you, it pays; it pays! Go ye and learn what this meaneth—Merciful love I desire and not sacrifice."

Instead of coming and disturbing the disciples, the carping critics are told to go and study the meaning of the Word of God in Hosea 6:6. It is interesting to note, in

passing, that in Hosea 6:1 God is referred to as the Healer or Physician of a sick people. The national failings and sins of Ephraim, or of the northern kingdom, are described figuratively as "sickness" and the "wound" of Judah is only another name for the sins of the southern kingdom (5:13). What a wealth of meaning, therefore, lies in the figure which Jesus employed in speaking of Himself as the Physician of spiritually sick people! The efforts of Jehovah to heal a desperately sick but unwilling people are now continued by the Messiah of history who summons sick souls to be cured. The quotation from Hosea 6:6 must have been familiar to men who professed to be zealous students of the Old Testament, but while they had memorized the words, they had missed the prophet's meaning. It is perfectly obvious that Jesus did not mean to imply that sacrifice is worthless. In its abbreviated form, the first half of the verse, superficially considered, looks like a rejection of sacrificial offerings. But this is not the case; indeed, we are absolutely sure that it was not understood that way, either by the Master Himself or by His carping complainers. For be it remembered that in this passage of Hosea we are dealing with one of the simplest forms of Hebrew poetry. The verse to which our quotation belongs is divided into two parts closely parallel to each other in thought and meaning. So, then, the easiest way to interpret this quotation is to go to the second half of the verse and here we have, "And the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." The verse in full reads as follows: (a) "Merciful love I desire and not sacrifice, (b) and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." The thought expressed in the second half of the verse is practically parallel with our quotation, as will appear presently. By bearing in mind the second half of the verse, the sense of Jesus' quotation becomes at once apparent. Our Lord means to say that in God's

sight acts of mercy springing from love to God and man are worth more than the sacrifice of rams and bullocks just as a practical knowledge of God is worth more than burnt-offerings.

The "knowledge of God," according to Biblical usage, is not an intellectual thing. It is knowledge in action, not in terms of speculative thought but of living service. This knowledge has a decidedly practical bearing upon the duties of every-day life. To know God means to know something of God's character as it has been revealed to us in the past, and more especially in His dealings with Israel. The whole course of sacred history can be accounted for on the basis of God's love for His people, love being His chief characteristic. The knowledge of God, then, has reference to a true knowledge of God's character. Such knowledge ought to lead a man to repentance, especially when he sees his shortcomings in the light of God's revealed character. He ought to feel a strong desire to imitate in his life this chief characteristic of God which is love. In Hosea 6:4 God rebukes Israel for its failure to exhibit this element of His character in the national life, saying, "What shall I make of thee, Ephraim? What shall I make of thee, Judah? since your love is like a morning cloud and like the dew so early gone." To sacrifice animal victims upon the altar is not repentance for past misdeeds. Real repentance includes not only a Godly sorrow for sin but also a desire to conform one's ways to the will of God. Formal sacrifices will not bring forgiveness to a loveless, ungodly heart; they are no substitute for loving conduct, for "merciful love I have desired and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings."

The knowledge of God, rightly understood, is followed by a loving sense of duty to one's fellowmen. This is the underlying principle of Hosea 6:6, which the Pharisees

had overlooked. They laid stress on the ritualistic aspect of the passage—on the "sacrifices" and "burnt-offerings," which were a part of the formal worship at the central sanctuary. They overemphasized the legal and ceremonial aspects of religion while Jesus, because of the Pharisees' over-emphasis upon this very thing, emphasized the weightier matters of the law, which found expression in walking humbly with God, in faith and loving service. As over against the legal method of the Pharisees, Jesus put His finger upon the method of the prophets, that is to say, upon the moral side of religion which must ever be regarded as a necessary element in religion. From what has been said it is superfluous to add that Jesus was not an opponent of the ceremonial law as such. That He had nothing to interpose to its observance follows from passages like Matthew 5 : 17-19 and 23 : 3, 23. But Jesus has no patience with a one-sided ceremonial legalism which sets aside the fundamental requirement of both the law and the prophets, and this He finds in loving sympathy and compassion to those in need. If God places a higher value upon love and mercy than upon sacrifice, then it follows that the blessed work of bending down to meet in compassionate love the submerged and ostracised classes, so that the snapped circle of humanity may be restored, is worth more than the vain attempt of the Pharisees to prove their zeal for righteousness by separating themselves, in a heartless manner, from the transgressors of the law. By showing mercy Jesus interprets to the world the very heart of God, thereby laying the foundation for every charitable and philanthropic undertaking and for the greatest of all enterprises—the glorious work of evangelization on the home and foreign field.

Christ's argument as to the necessity of His way of procedure is unanswerable, since it goes to the root of the whole matter. To imitate God's character and to manifest

compassion upon those in distress is far more acceptable to God than any number of outward offerings and formal acts of homage. As love is an essential part of religion the Pharisees must read in the quotation from Hosea their own condemnation, for this is the very thing they lack. Incidentally it points to a loveless heart, full of prejudice, harshness and bitter hatred. If they are willing to make love the basis of their attitude to God and man, then well and good, but if not, they can have neither part nor lot in the kingdom of the Messiah. The scribes think they have done their duty when they keep the law which they have studied in all its details. But legal righteousness will not avail since it lacks the fundamental requirement of the law, which is love. Not until they grasp this fundamental principle of religion will they understand why Jesus should associate with sinners. The latter realized how sinful they were, while the former felt satisfied with their past accomplishments. In the present state of their mind, Jesus can do nothing for the scribes and Pharisees. Consequently He must turn from those who look for nothing higher in religion than legal righteousness, to "sinners," who offer a far better soil for evangelic truth than the self-conceited Pharisees. "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." For this announcement of Christ's mission on earth we have to thank the Pharisees and we now understand what is meant by the parable of the physician. We learn, among other things, that the contrast expressed in the above figure by "healthy" and "sick" is equivalent to the terms "righteous" and "sinners."

But from what has already been said about the way of righteousness marked out by the scribes, the really "sick" may be the carping questioners themselves, who are far from righteous according to the underlying principle of Old Testament morality, although they may be regarded as

such from a purely legal standpoint. For the moment, however, Jesus takes them at their own valuation and therein finds His defense. He justifies His conduct in associating with publicans and sinners on the basis of His mission, which is to those who personally feel the need of it. As He was come to seek and to save that which was lost, His mission is not to the "righteous," even if such were to be found, but to the sinners who need His loving sympathy and compassion. He is the Physician of sick souls and He is come to heal sinners. Although this Physician does not ignore the ills of the body, as we learn from the gospel narrative, His healing activity addresses itself first and foremost to the moral and spiritual ills of life. He is the Healer of sinners who brings spiritual renewal, spiritual health and moral vigour. His presence is medicinal, so to speak, to mind and heart, to soul and spirit. He is chiefly concerned with the spiritual effect of His mission, for He came to call sinners to repentance, which has reference to a change of mind and heart under a new impression of spiritual facts. He does not look upon the submerged classes as beyond the possibility of redemption through repentance and faith in the larger possibilities of the kingdom of God. The door to this kingdom is open to every man, irrespective of class or nation, who shows the proper attitude toward it. Jesus virtually declares a gospel for sinners.

But has He no message for the righteous? Not as such. The whole drift of the argument points to the inadequacy of legal standards of righteousness. The "righteous" must admit the insufficiency of a superficial literalism, which leaves untouched the deeper and more basic things of Old Testament law and prophecy before He can do anything for them. Jesus shows elsewhere that the artificial distinction between "righteous" and "sinners" cannot hold. The "righteous" Pharisees devoured widows'

houses under the cloak of legal respectability and thanked God that they were not as other men. The unrighteous publicans, on the other hand, were honest enough to confess their sins and so fulfil the first condition of cure. Christ's call to sinners is expressly said to be a call to repentance. Any man who has nothing to confess cannot be sincere either with himself or with his God. The publican in the parable who smote upon his breast is a fit candidate for entrance into a kingdom of redeemed sinners. He is the type of man Jesus will select as His co-worker.

The number of disciples already gained was gradually increased to twelve. The call of Matthew was no doubt speedily followed by the selection of the men still needed to complete the apostolic nucleus of a new Israel. The time of their appointment can only be approximated. Matthew, as we have seen, records the selection by Jesus of the two pairs of brothers and Levi the tax-gatherer, but makes no mention of a special call of the apostolic band as such. He evidently presupposes it in his account of their missionary tour in Galilee. By that time the requisite number had been already made up, for they are spoken of in the tenth chapter as "His twelve disciples." All that the Evangelist says in that connection is that when Jesus "had called unto Him His twelve disciples," He sent them forth on their first missionary journey after they had received some preliminary instruction as to the nature of the work which they were expected to do. But according to Mark the Twelve were called some time before they were sent forth on their preaching and healing mission. He tells us that Jesus ascended the well-known hill in the vicinity of Capernaum and there called "unto Him whom He Himself desired." In Matthew this ascent introduces the Sermon on the Mount and in Luke the call of the Twelve precedes that event, leaving us to infer that the Twelve were chosen immediately before the delivery of the

Sermon on the Mount. From the contextual setting of Mark 3:13-19 and Luke 6:12-19, where the appointment of the Twelve is briefly described, it appears that Jesus had been preaching for some months before the choice was made. Galilee had been deeply stirred by His ministry. Eager Galilæans followed Him from place to place. This throng gradually assumed phenomenal proportions. From all parts of the country the people came in great masses, bringing with them a host of human wreckage. But the spread of His fame throughout all Palestine and the adjoining regions aroused the opposition of the Pharisees, who were already consulting the Herodians as to how they might destroy Him. They had taken offense, among other things, at Christ's healing activity on the Sabbath day. Jesus, however, in order to avoid fruitless controversy with His enemies, repairs to the lakeside, where He is soon surrounded by an enthusiastic multitude. Indeed, the multitude was so great at times that it was necessary for Him to withdraw in a boat which the disciples kept in readiness for just such occasions.

Apparently the work of Jesus had grown on His hands to almost unmanageable proportions. Popular enthusiasm was opening opportunities on a vast scale, demanding not one but many workers. The need for helpers and assistants in the work of preaching and healing was most imperative, all the more so because of the hostile attitude of the Pharisees, who represented the most powerful forces in Judaism. If this need is to be met Jesus must multiply Himself, as it were, in His disciples who are to share in the work of their Master. Provision must be made not only for present but also for future needs. Up to this time Jesus had worked single-handed. But now the ever-widening circle of those among whom He had to work was calling for some kind of organization and division of labour. The growth of our Lord's work required co-

operative effort, as it was a physical impossibility for Jesus to be everywhere at one and the same time. Conditions were ripe for the selection of the members of the apostolic college. Luke marks the importance of the occasion by informing us that the choice was made after a night spent in prayer on a mountain near Capernaum. It was a momentous step, for which retirement was necessary. Jesus must have time to think and pray over it. A decision like this can only be reached after consultation with the Father. Accordingly Jesus withdraws from the distracting scenes of a busy life to the quietness of the hill-country, probably to the place where He subsequently delivered His great sermon, in order to be alone with God. Not far from the mountain-top to which He withdrew, a large number of His followers, whom He had previously summoned by individual selection, were awaiting His return. There on the mountain-top, away from all earthly influences, Jesus that night went over the list of likely candidates, as it were, presenting them all one by one to His Father in order to ascertain the divine will concerning the personnel of His Cabinet. The following morning He selected from the larger circle of His followers the twelve apostles. Why twelve men, and no more, should constitute that inner circle is not expressly stated. But as this is Christ's first act in the corporate organization of His Church, there can be little doubt that the number twelve is in clear allusion to the tribes of a new Israel. And, besides, this number of twelve had its sacred associations. There were, for instance, the twelve patriarchs, the twelve tribes, the twelve stones on the breastplate of the High Priest, the twelve loaves of the shewbread, etc. Henceforth the Twelve were to be regarded as the official representatives of Christ's kingdom. The threefold purpose of their appointment is described in Mark 3: 14-15. Here we read, " And He appointed twelve that they might be with Him,

and that He might send them forth to preach and to have authority to cast out demons."

The primary reason for the choice was fellowship or constant association with Himself. Instead of the large but fluctuating numbers of those who have till now been following Him, Jesus concentrates His efforts upon a comparatively small circle of disciples. They are to "be with Him" constantly that He might train them for their future work. If they are to teach others, they must sit at the Master's feet and learn of Him. They must catch the inspiration of His matchless words and of His unique personality. They are to witness His deeds and ultimately rise to the height of a victorious faith in the Son of God. This being with Jesus is to be their high school, or college, or seminary course. And what a wonderful training school it must have been! Those taught were far from perfect, but they were perfectible. Jesus, the incomparable Teacher, met with great success. And although Judas Iscariot was a failure, any school in which only one fails is certainly a noteworthy school! That his faith in the Messiahship of Jesus began to wane toward the close of Christ's ministry is no indication that he was not a genuine disciple, when Jesus first selected him as an apostle of the new kingdom. No one would be foolish enough to assume that Judas was a traitor at heart when he was chosen. Had the treasurer of the apostolic band not become the victim of the demon of covetousness he might have developed into as grand an apostle as the best of them. On the basis of his previous business experience he later developed "an eye for business," in spite of the Master's admonition, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you." A man who is more interested in his own concerns than in the Master's business will naturally fail to understand the spiritual program of Jesus. The betrayer was a double-minded man

who believed in putting self uppermost. He was mean enough to appropriate to his own uses money out of the common fund, with which he had been entrusted. John 12:6 states that the fault-finding pursebearer of the apostolic band was a petty thief. Self-love is always capable of treachery and bad faith. What a solemn lesson this is to the Master's disciples everywhere. A man may fall from his high spiritual estate by setting his heart upon earthly things. The sin of Judas has not become extinct. Some nominal Christians will sell their Lord for less than thirty pieces of silver, for what are the intangible rewards of a purely spiritual kingdom to a worshipper of earthly success! But to return to the men who left all to be with Jesus, so that they might afterwards be His witnesses and carry forward His work.

The second reason for the selection by Jesus of the twelve apostles was "that He might send them forth to preach." Through their constant association with the great Teacher and Preacher, they were to be trained for their future vocation as preachers and teachers of divine truth. Thereby Jesus intends to make true in the case of the Twelve the words He had spoken to the two pairs of brothers at the commencement of His Galilæan ministry, when He said, "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." Ere they are allowed to witness for the truth as it is in Jesus, they are first admitted into the sacred college of residence with Him. The work of preaching, whatever else it may involve, certainly presupposes seclusion with Jesus. This is not to undervalue the place of true scholarship and intellectual attainment in ministerial education. The best cure for intellectual stagnation is abiding fellowship with Christ. Before they can act as His messengers in the work of proclaiming the good news of salvation they must "be with Him." He will give His chief attention to the training of the immediate

followers till He is able to send them forth as the Father had sent Him. The very title given to the Twelve points to the ultimate purpose for which they were called. They were named apostles by Jesus, because He was thinking of their future work. The twelve apostles were to be the first missionaries. After training them, Jesus wished to "send them forth," and the Latin equivalent also means "one who is sent" on a mission. The apostle is a missionary or messenger, heralding the good news of salvation. He is more than a mere witness; he is a delegated witness, if you please, who speaks for God. He is an envoy or ambassador of Jesus Christ, sent by Him, as He was sent by the Father. He speaks with the authority of a chosen representative. He is to act as a herald of the Messianic King, and a herald is an official who makes public proclamation of weighty matters. The proclamation of the apostles has to do with the coming kingdom. Although they would not be able to preach as Jesus preached, they could give men some idea of the Father of Jesus Christ on the basis of what they had seen and heard. They could in some degree carry on Christ's work of healing, for that was to be a part of their mission.

The stewardship of healing is given as the third reason for the selection of the Twelve. The truth of their proclamation is established by the authority conferred upon them to cast out demons. The kingdom of God shall be ushered in by the casting out of demons, which is regarded as the representative miracle of the new era. With the approach of Israel's Messiah the kingdom of darkness will lose its power. This expulsive power of Christ's gospel, which was a part of the preaching, was to show the superiority of the new kingdom over the forces of evil. It was to address itself to the spiritual and physical needs of the afflicted and oppressed. This is the gospel that Jesus preached, and those signs of its power which have gone

with it hitherto, shall also accompany the preaching of the apostles.

This solemn choosing of the twelve apostles is followed by a list of their names in Mark 3: 16-19 and Luke 6: 14-16. There is a similar list in Matthew 10: 2-4 and Acts 1: 13. The order of the names varies somewhat in these four catalogues. Then, too, there are some variations in the designations which are employed. The four lists, however, contain practically the same names, except in Acts 1: 13, where the name of Judas Iscariot is omitted, Matthias being elected in his stead. It is interesting to note that Matthew classifies the apostles in pairs, the Twelve being named in the following order: Peter and Andrew; James and John, the sons of Zebedee; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew; James, son of Alphæus, and Thaddæus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot. From Mark 6: 7 we infer that the apostles were thus joined when Jesus sent them out two by two on their first missionary journey. But a comparison of all four lists soon reveals the fact that the names are arranged in three groups of four persons each and that the same apostles, Peter, Philip and James son of Alphæus, stand first in each group. The members of the first group, particularly Peter, James and John, were men of marked ability, to judge from the gospel narrative. In Matthew and Luke the two pairs of brothers are kept together, whereas in Mark, Andrew is mentioned after the sons of Zebedee, because of the insertion of the descriptive names given to the latter by Jesus. We have already made their acquaintance in connection with the call of the four fishermen, previously described. Peter as the natural born leader of the apostolic group always appears at the head of the Twelve. His Hebrew name Simon or Simeon suggests that God, as in the case of Leah's son Simeon, "had heard" the prayer of his mother for a son. The word

Peter is Greek and corresponds to Aramaic Cephas, "a stone" or "rock." Though he was a man of rock-like certitude, when it came to the point of expressing his faith in the Messiahship of Jesus, his impetuosity sometimes got him into trouble. He was a ready spokesman, because he was quick to see things and to put into words his thoughts, emotions and convictions.

His brother Andrew is a quiet, cautious, steady man. He is not subject to the fluctuating moods of his impulsive but distinguished brother. His Greek name implies that he was a "manly" man. If he cannot be a leader in the apostolic group, he will do what he can to further the interests of the Master's kingdom. We cannot help but admire him, because he is always looking up somebody to bring to Jesus. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, are closely associated, as we have seen, with Simon Peter and Andrew his brother. The "sons of thunder" are warm-blooded, hot-tempered youths. They have strong likes and dislikes; they are loyal friends and ardent in their attachments but quick to resent a slight either to themselves or to the object of their love and devotion. They are men of strong character, ardent in their love but violent in their antagonisms. The burning enthusiasm and fiery zeal of their earlier days is more like the thunder-peals and fiery bolts of an Elijah than the stateliness and calm of John the "beloved" disciple. In the lists of the apostles, James, which is the same as Jacob, a supplanter, is always mentioned before John. Probably James was older than his brother, and hence the former takes precedence over the latter. But the time came when John's qualities of leadership were second only to those of Peter and, indeed, it will be no exaggeration to say that he stood first in the Master's affections. This kind of priority does not depend upon the accident of birth but upon a spiritual relationship, growing out of unbounded confidence and faith in a loving Christ.

The first member of the second group is Philip. He is the fifth believer and hails from Bethsaida. His Greek name, together with that of Andrew, incidentally proves that some Greek at least was spoken in Galilee by the side of Aramaic. Philip signifies "a lover of horses." He is a practical man who likes to count up the cost of things. But he is interested in more than mere figures and statistics, as may be seen from John 1:44; 6:5; 12:21-22 and 14:8. It might be remarked in passing that the Greeks who wanted to interview Jesus, first approach Philip and Andrew, inferentially because the disciples with their Greek names would establish a better point of contact between Jesus and the Greeks than any of the other disciples. Like Andrew, Philip is a quiet, practical worker, whose missionary impulse leads him to seek out Nathanael, also called Bartholomew, with whom he is associated in all the lists except the fourth. In Acts 1:13 the name of Thomas is inserted between Philip and Bartholomew. But in the other three lists Thomas and Matthew are mentioned together. Matthew is mentioned before Thomas in both Mark and Luke, but modesty prompts Matthew in his summary to give the precedence to Thomas. Since Matthew the publican is already a familiar figure, we pass on to Thomas or Didymus, the "Twin." But whose twin brother was he? Some have supposed that he was a twin brother of Matthew. The latter, as we know, was a man of practical affairs, full of energy, decision and strength of faith. This, in addition to the claims of blood, may have led Jesus to pair him off with doubting Thomas, who could not rise to the height of faith without the stilts of physical demonstration. And yet for all that we rather like him, because he was an honest doubter who sought the truth and found it. To a scientific age, like ours, he is an interesting character. He certainly has his good points, otherwise Jesus would not have been so patient with him. In

John 14:5 he asks, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" This question drew from our Lord the memorable answer, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." While he is slow to believe and even unwilling at times to believe good news without the most convincing proof of its truth, he is nevertheless open to conviction, and when once convinced of the unreasonableness of his doubts, he breaks forth into one of the noblest and grandest confessions in the Gospels (John 20:28). And how courageous he is in the presence of danger! When he heard that Jesus intended to go to Bethany in spite of His foes, he said to his fellow disciples, "Let us go also, that we may die with Him!" (John 11:16). He was loyal at heart and ready, if necessary, to die with His Lord.

James, son of Alphæus, heads the third group, but we know little more concerning him, except that there is a slight possibility, as some think, of his being Matthew's brother, on the ground that he, too, is a son of Alphæus. But the identification of this Alphæus with the father of Matthew is questioned by others, who believe that if Matthew and the James under consideration were brothers it would be so indicated in the lists. Everyone will admit, however, that this is far from conclusive, as the argument from silence proves nothing. All that can be said is that the identification of the two names must remain an open question in the face of such scant evidence. But the question of possible relationship between the two men is of practical interest. However, we cannot pursue the question any further, except to say that according to some early texts the occupation of the first member of the third group was identical with that of Matthew, which is of interest in showing that Levi was not the only tax-gatherer among the apostles. The name of his father distinguishes

him from James the son of Zebedee. There was also a second Simon among the Twelve, who is known as the Zealot to distinguish him from his celebrated namesake. He belonged to the party of the Zealots who followed Judas the Galilæan or the Gaulonite, in his opposition to the Roman domination. The members of this party acknowledged no king but Jehovah. They were animated with peculiar zeal for the recovery of Jewish freedom, and punished without trial or "lynched" every law-breaker coming under their notice, finding precedent and sanction in the case of Phinehas (Num. 25:7). They bitterly opposed the Romans and sought for an opportunity to establish by force the kingdom of God. Their rigid adherence to the Mosaic law and to the national institutions brought them into open conflict with the Romans at the time of the census referred to in Luke 2 (See also Acts 5:37). Josephus, in his *Antiquities* (XVIII, 1, 1) informs us that the Romans had some difficulty in crushing the uprising. At a later date the smouldering flame of Hebrew nationalism blazed forth in a perfect frenzy of fanaticism which brought about the final catastrophe of Israel. In this struggle the Zealots played a terrible part. Simon the Zealot, however, if he was still alive, could hardly have been in sympathy with the fanatical and reckless proceedings of an unavailing patriotism. The ex-Zealot no longer believed in exalting the carnal weapons of barbarous warfare as a solution for the ills of life. Judas of Galilee had wielded the sword and perished with the sword. The current political philosophy had failed. Jesus of Nazareth, the new Leader, soon made it apparent that He had come to establish a spiritual and, therefore, universal kingdom, depending solely upon the exercise of spiritual weapons, such as the sword of the Spirit or the two-edged sword of God's all-conquering Word. It gradually dawned upon Simon that while the ordinary weapons of warfare might

achieve a physical victory, they can never take the citadel within the soul of man, the man within being conquered not by brute force but by the omnipotent force of gospel truth as exemplified in a life of sacrificial service out of love to God and man.

The disciple next mentioned is Judas, son of James, otherwise known as Lebbæus and Thaddæus. The last two names seemingly indicate that he was a big-hearted, whole-souled man. This Judas is "Judas the pious" in contradistinction to the infamous betrayer, who seems to be the only disciple who was not a Galilæan. The last member of the apostolic group is said to hail from Kiryoth. As there was a town of that name in Judah, he may have been a Judæan. But this is not altogether certain, as there was also a town of that name in Moab. Some think that Kiryoth is to be identified with Koræ in the Jordan Valley, not far from Jericho. If this is correct the treasurer and business manager of the Twelve may have come under the prophetic influence of John the Baptist. If he was a Judæan he may have become one of Christ's followers at the time of His visit to the Jordan, alluded to in John 3:22. Why Jesus should have chosen the "Man of Kiryoth" remains a mysterious and baffling subject to many Christians. But it is well to remember that Jesus, as we have said before, must have recognized in him, at the time of his selection, as in the case of the Eleven, an apostle in the making. We may rest assured that the shadow of coming treachery had not as yet obscured his path. Even if the germ of a ruinous avarice was already present when he was chosen, it must not be overlooked that there was also present the germ of faith which, under proper conditions, might have served as a counteracting influence over the former. His weakness, whatever it was, might have been overcome by the upward pull of a dynamic, personal faith in Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, however, his

doubts and sordid desires predominated over his shrinking and impotent faith. But the evil course of development might have been arrested, all along the line, as in the case of Peter, by repentance, that is to say, by a change of mind and heart with respect to religious values or the realities of life. In either case the seed sown by the Master was the same, but the tares which Judas Iscariot harboured in his heart grew up and choked the good seed. The fruits of faith will not grow in such soil. Having followed the line of least resistance all along, the faithless traitor " went out and hanged himself," preferring the way of cowardly self-destruction to the penitential garb of a repenting sinner.

The nomination of the Twelve is followed by a period of preparation and training in the school of Jesus. How much time elapsed between the choice of the apostles and their first commission to preach we do not know. It is quite certain, however, that the first apostolic tour in Galilee could not have been in immediate prospect when they were chosen, as may be seen from the twofold purpose of their appointment, alluded to in Mark 3:14. According to Mark 6:7 this trial mission of the Twelve came later. The intervening chapters show how the chosen apostles were trained for active service. But Mark is not the only Evangelist to distinguish between the call to service and the actual mission of the Twelve. That Luke makes a similar distinction is clear from what is recorded between the formal appointment of the Twelve and their experimental tour in Galilee (6:20-chap. 9). In Luke 6:13 we have the selection of the apostles before the Sermon on the Mount, and it is significant to note that various incidents are recorded in chapters 7 and 8 before we come to the trial mission in Galilee, referred to in chapter 9. All this goes to show that Jesus attached great importance to the training of His co-workers and future successors. We

ought carefully to observe the gradual process by which our Lord prepared them to do a work of preaching and healing similar to His own. John 1:35-51 relates, for example, how John's disciples had met the Nazarene. Matthew 4:18-22 shows how this acquaintance ripened into discipleship. Soon thereafter Matthew is called upon to leave his place of employment and join the ranks of those who were to become fishers of men. Then followed the selection of the twelve representatives of a new Israel, who were to be trained for special duties. They are now enrolled in the school of Christ, so to speak, with a view to their being sent forth, after a period of constant fellowship with the Master, to their own people. By training the disciples for the duties of apostleship, He could in a measure multiply Himself and reach those perishing throngs which could be seen everywhere by the discerning and penetrating eye of the great Lover of men's souls.

The mission of the Twelve, spoken of in Matthew 9:35-11, 1; Mark 6:7-13; and Luke 9:1-6 is occasioned by a missionary tour made by Jesus through Galilee, in which He is deeply impressed by the greatness of the spiritual need and the utter lack of competent religious leaders. In this Galilæan circuit of teaching, preaching and healing, He found a thirst for "the living waters," but no teachers endowed with the gift of interpretation. The fountains of compassion welled up in that vast heart as He looked out upon the famishing multitudes, "because they were distressed and scattered as sheep not having a shepherd." This telling simile, borrowed from shepherd-life, recalls to our mind the passage in I Kings 22:17, where the prophet says to Ahab, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills as sheep that have no shepherd." The reference is to a lack of leadership in Israel at this time; the flock is scattered because there is no shepherd to guide the sheep. At an earlier period Joshua is appointed to succeed Moses "that

the congregation of Jehovah be not as sheep having no shepherd" (Num. 27:17).

Jehovah Himself is spoken of in the Old Testament as the Shepherd of His people (Ps. 80:1; 100:3), the best-known examples being found in Isaiah 40:11 and in the Shepherd-Psalm of Israel (23). The figure is frequently applied to the prophets and kings of Israel, who are to guide the destinies of the nation. They are the under-shepherds of Jehovah charged with the solemn responsibility of shepherding the flock committed to their care. But the spirit of the hireling wrought great havoc at times in the sheepfold. Ezekiel 34 complains that the shepherds of Israel were feeding themselves and not the flock. The latter half of the chapter points to a future Shepherd of the house of David, who shall gather the scattered sheep and feed them. In the eyes of Jesus, the good Shepherd, the common people were like shepherdless sheep driven on by thirst and hunger in search of water-brooks and green pastures but, losing their way in the trackless desert, they finally sink down in utter exhaustion, some scattered here and there; others in their bruised condition staggering on a little while longer until they, too, lie prostrate on the ground. Their pitiful state is due to the absence of true shepherds. Rapacious hirelings have done violence to God's flock. They are the thieves and robbers, adverted to in John 10. Not content with feeding themselves at the expense of a hungry flock, they have lacerated and torn the sheep, robbing them of their fleece and leaving them half dead under the crushing load of burdens imposed on them by the under-shepherds of Jehovah. Of course, there was the semblance of food, such as the dry husks of a barren legalism. But the legal verbosity of hair-splitting lawyers could not satisfy the instinctive craving of the people for wholesome food. Scribes and Pharisees, men trained in the law and appointed to feed the flock in every

synagogue of the land, vainly sought to meet this cry for bread by handing out to the famishing multitudes nothing but husks and stones and other substitutes. The official teachers of the day could not teach; they rarely, if ever, got on the inside of religion. These blind leaders of the blind seemed to have overlooked the fact that religion must get under the surface and penetrate to the very core of a man's being before there can be any genuine religious and ethical reactions in every-day life. A faith that works by love to God and man means infinitely more to religion and conduct than the external standards of Pharisaic legalism and traditionalism.

Jesus in His tour of the towns and synagogues of Galilee, notes with sadness the spiritual destitution of the people. He found the weary multitudes groping after the truth in the dark mazes of an endless chain of bewildering laws. Human traditions had taken the place of the Word of God. Inasmuch as there are no true pastors in the land, the good Shepherd must seek out the scattered sheep and lead them to the wells of salvation, where they may drink and live. And how eagerly they responded to the Shepherd's voice! By some inner intuition they immediately felt that He would lead them, not to the deceitful oasis of another mirage, but to the living waters of His quickening Word. In Him they found both meat and drink indeed. Attracted by His healing Word, the scattered sheep came forth from the towns and hamlets of Galilee and Jesus fed and healed them. Instead of a scattered flock of bleating and lost sheep, spread over the hillsides and waste places of the earth, we now see teeming multitudes swarming about the Shepherd of their souls. The success of their missionary tour suggests to the mind of Jesus, as He gazes at the great moving mass of humanity surging wave-like back and forth, waving fields of golden grain, such as one might frequently see at Gennesa-

ret or on the plains of Jezreel. The hungry multitudes resembled a harvest-field ready for the reapers. What a spiritual harvest might be reaped if only the present number of labourers could be materially augmented. "Then He saith unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord (that is to say, the Owner) of the harvest, that He may send forth labourers into His harvest." The harvest requires, not one, but many labourers. The work of Jesus and that of His predecessor, John the Baptist, is not sufficient. As a preparation for active service, they are bidden to pray the Lord of the harvest, to whom this harvest of souls belongs, that He may "thrust forth" more labourers into His harvest. While God must do the actual sending in answer to earnest and persistent prayer, prospective workers must experience something of the reflexive influence of prayer, otherwise the call of God for more labourers will remain unheeded.

Prayer works in two ways. On the one hand, it prompts God to direct action in behalf of His children; and on the other, it prepares the man, who prays, for the call when it comes. The Lord of the harvest does not need to be stirred up to benevolent activity. He is always ready, when the reapers are ready. As it is His will that the harvest should be reaped through human agency, the reapers that are needed must give prayerful consideration to the King's business, so that they can be "thrust forth" into their respective fields of labour by the energy of a divine mission and call. The call to prayer must always precede the call to service, not that the Owner of all the earth needs to be specially reminded of the sad condition of any portion of His vast domains, but because He can use only such labourers as are in sympathy with His plans. It is certainly significant, to say the least, that in the case of the disciples the call to prayer is followed by their first

evangelistic attempt in Galilee. They could hardly have been sent before. The great spiritual need, manifest on every hand, was not sufficient to convert them into missionaries. The sight of a shepherdless multitude filled the Master's heart with infinite pity and compassion. But the disciples must also be filled with a similar passion for souls. Accordingly, Jesus set them thinking and praying about the spiritual condition of the people of their native province, urging them to observe the greatness of the spiritual harvest and the small number of labourers; they are to pray that the lack may be speedily supplied. Their heartfelt prayer in behalf of Galilee is answered by the call of the Master Himself, commissioning them to preach and empowering them to cast out demons and heal the sick as He Himself had done.

The disciples are now, for the first time, to become apostles, sent forth as heralds to proclaim the near approach of God's kingdom and to emphasize the necessity of repentance as a preparation for its advent. Their message, as in the case of the Baptist and of Jesus, is summed up in the words, " Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This being their first attempt at evangelism, the preaching is to be brief and simple. For the sake of companionship and mutual co-operation the Lord sent them out two by two, which recalls their distribution into pairs in the lists of the apostles (Matt. 10: 2-4; Luke 6: 13-15). Though the mission was in a sense an educational experiment for the disciples' own benefit, they are not to apologize to the villagers of Galilee, to whom they are sent, for their lack of experience in preaching. It will be of some comfort to them to know that they have been authorized to preach and that they may point to extraordinary powers of healing as credentials of their mission and as proofs of the coming of the kingdom. For the present, the field of their missionary endeavours is restricted to their own country-

men. "These twelve Jesus sent forth and charged them saying, Go not into any way of the Gentiles," such as the roads leading to the Greek colonies in the vicinity known as the Decapolis, "and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The spiritual destitution of a shepherdless and scattered people lay heavy on Christ's heart. In keeping with the instinct of a true shepherd, Jesus regards the lost sheep of the house of Israel as the first objects of His loving care. If the twelve apostles are to be looked upon as the spiritual representatives of the twelve tribes, they must address themselves to the task immediately before them, so that a new Israel may take the place of the old. The disciples are given to understand that their first obligation is to their own people, to the twelve tribes of Israel. The spell of the spiritual scene, witnessed by Jesus in His recent Galilæan circuit of preaching and healing, still lingers in His soul. The children of Israel were like a shepherdless flock of scattered sheep. Without faith in the Messiah they are lost. The disciples must supplement His labours without delay. And they will have a measure of success, too. Jesus had found that the multitudes in Galilee were ready enough to welcome the glad tidings of salvation. And besides, the preference must be given to the Jews, who had the first claim to the gospel. Opportunity must be given them to hear the Shepherd's voice before there can be any thought of evangelizing the large Gentile population in Galilee.

By availing themselves of this home mission opportunity, amid conditions with which they were thoroughly familiar, the apprentice missionaries would gain their first experience in soul-winning, thus enabling them at a later date to bring in the other sheep, spoken of in John 10: 16, which are not of the fold of Israel. The Samaritans and Gentiles were not to be permanently excluded. Perhaps

the disciples had some idea of the wider extension of the gospel, otherwise it would be difficult to account, in the present instance, for the restriction of their missionary enterprise to their own Galilæan countrymen. But they are hardly competent as yet to deal in a Christ-like spirit, with the religious fanaticism of the Samaritans or to preach with profit to their pagan neighbours. They are best equipped to preach to Jews, and hence the scene of their evangelic labours is laid in their own native province. They are but beginners who must be satisfied to do the work of apprentices, dispersing in pairs throughout the villages and trusting to the hospitality of those to whom they ministered. They are to go just as they are. If they happen to have a staff in their hand and sandals on their feet, and a coat on their back, well and good. Let them go simply clad and not make any special provisions for the journey, depending upon the free, open hospitality of the East for the satisfaction of their meagre wants.

For this is no ordinary or protracted journey; if it were they might do well to put sufficient money in their folded girdles for any emergency that might arise. They go as heralds of the King of kings, and their wants will be duly supplied in accordance with the proverb that "the labourer is worthy of his hire." Freedom from care for the purpose of complete concentration on their mission is the aim. They are to go at once, unencumbered with cares about food or raiment. All these things will be added unto them, if they will but seek first the kingdom of God and all that pertains to the welfare of immortal souls. In their case, further preparations in the way of outward equipment must not be thought of for a moment, as superfluous baggage would only be a great hindrance to the speedy fulfilment of their mission. The King's business demands haste, detachment and full consecration. His

fleet-footed heralds have an important message to deliver. The time is short, they must hasten on their way and not waste time with elaborate wayside salutations. In general, however, they are to observe, on their arrival in a given village, the usual courtesies, greeting in the accustomed manner the people with whom they expected to stay while preaching in the vicinity. Their commission includes various instructions for the fulfilment of their mission. They shall have respect to the spiritual and temporal wants of their countrymen. For this purpose there has been committed to them the stewardship of preaching and healing. What they have received from the Master they are to impart to others on the principle, "Freely ye have received, freely give." These words, strictly speaking, apply to the power of healing and of exorcism, conferred upon them by Christ, not in return for a monetary consideration, but as a gratuitous gift. The exercise of such power must be kept free from every taint of covetousness. The apostles are not to come down to the level of the Jewish exorcists and pagan magicians, who put everything on a commercial basis. They are not commercial travellers offering their spiritual wares to the highest bidder. The gift of healing is not to be regarded as a means of gain, but a sacred trust. To accept support from those to whom they ministered is allowable, but to take payment for healing the sick is to commercialize religion and bring it into disrepute.

The above principle has a still wider extension. It applies not only to the gift of healing and to material things; it extends to every form of spiritual endowment. Thank God, there are some things in this greedy world of ours, which cannot be sold and bought. The priceless treasures of the gospel are for all. To make a trade of religion is to degrade it. What the disciples have received as a free gift, they are to impart to others gratuitously, that is, without money and without price. Spiritual gifts cannot be

evaluated in terms of dollars and cents. They are above money and above every price. But the principle, enunciated by Jesus, has a meaning for every Christian, whether lay or clerical. Merely to imbibe spiritual refreshment without some form of Christian activity, leads to spiritual dyspepsia. Spiritual inertia and apathy leads to the loss of God's gifts, for what we endeavour to keep for ourselves we lose, and what we give to others we keep and retain. In all our giving, whether of ourselves or of our possessions, we should be actuated by the same disinterested benevolence which has made us the recipients of the grace of God, freely communicated to us.

In His circuit of preaching and healing in the larger cities and towns of Galilee, Jesus is impressed by the spiritual destitution of the people. The heart of the good Shepherd yearns for His shepherdless and scattered flock. Ere many weeks elapse His loving quest is rewarded by the presence of an eager and expectant multitude, suggesting to the mind of Jesus a potential harvest of human souls. But such a harvest requires many labourers. The vastness of the work to be accomplished rendered it impossible for our Lord to visit the smaller villages and hamlets of Galilee. Luke 9:6 indicates that this is to be the task of the twelve home missionaries sent out by Christ to supplement His efforts in that province. But the ever-widening vision of harvests to be reaped elsewhere called for additional helpers. According to Luke 10:1-20 the trial mission of the Twelve in Galilee was succeeded by the mission of the Seventy. The mission of the latter probably belongs to the Peræan period of Christ's ministry. Growing opposition on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities and the threatening attitude of the tetrarch of Galilee, who was seeking His life, made it necessary for Jesus to concentrate His attention upon a portion of the east-Jordan country. To bring His ministry to a close

before the great truths of the gospel could be established in men's hearts would have retarded the work of the kingdom. Jesus was not afraid to die; but He realized that it was necessary, for the cause to which He had dedicated His life, that He should continue to live a little while longer, so that others might be trained to carry on the work after His enemies had done their worst.

It was at this time that He summoned seventy of His devoted followers, besides the Twelve, and sent them on ahead to the places He intended to visit. The Seventy-two, mentioned in some ancient manuscripts, may have been the original number of those sent out as forerunners of our Lord. This multiplication of the official representatives of the twelve tribes obviously points to the primary purpose of their mission; like the twelve apostles, they are sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. A more extensive gospel appeal is to be made. Included in the field of operations is Peræa and possibly also a part of Judæa. There is a noticeable difference between the mission of the Twelve and that of the Seventy, or of the Seventy-two. The former were sent to the villages of Galilee, preaching in places which the great Teacher had been unable to reach, but never going beyond the limits of the chosen race, whereas the latter were sent "into every city and place whither He Himself was about to come." The scene of their labours is laid in the half-Gentile districts on the east side of Jordan and, as Jesus actually visited the districts of Gadara and of the Decapolis, not to speak of the borderland of Tyre and Sidon over in the extreme northwest, it would seem that the day is not far off when the "other sheep," spoken of in another connection, would be gathered in the fold of one and the same Shepherd. But that day had not come as yet. For the present the Seventy are sent, not to the Gentiles, but to their own countrymen across the Jordan. They go forth

in pairs, thirty-five or thirty-six pairs in all, to prepare His way by healing the sick and preaching the gospel.

Naturally each pair of heralds would proceed to some definite town or village in anticipation of the Master's approaching visit. The instructions given them for the journey are almost identically the same as those of the Galilæan mission. It is for this reason that some have supposed that the mission of the Seventy is only another version of the mission of the Twelve. There is, however, no good reason for doubting the accuracy of Luke's account regarding this second mission toward the close of Christ's public ministry. Two such missions would be sure to have much in common. In each case similar conditions would have to be met and, therefore, the work would have to be done under similar, if not the same, instructions. That the Master should have repeated Himself on two similar occasions is what one might expect under the circumstances. With prophetic insight, Jesus foresees on both occasions, in view of what has already happened to John the Baptist, an element of danger to the missionaries themselves: the leaders of the nation will regard their mission with disfavour. But they are to meet such opposition as well as popular prejudice in the spirit of forbearance and Christian fortitude, knowing that the fear of God is the only effective weapon of overcoming the fear of men. They are to go with their eyes wide open and not become discouraged, if their mission should not prove to be an unqualified success. Let them be found faithful in the performance of present duty, no matter what may be the outcome, either to themselves or to those to whom they have been sent. The salvation of imperishable souls is at stake. The faithful acceptance of the missionaries' proclamation with respect to the kingdom of God will bring salvation, but woe to any individual or town that refuses to receive them and their message!

The possible rejection of His messengers by those to whom they were sent reminds Jesus of His own experience in such towns as Chorazin, Bethsaida and more particularly in Capernaum, where many of His mightiest deeds had been done. Mighty works bore adequate testimony to the Messianic claims of Jesus, but the dull-souled populace along the northern end of the Sea of Galilee had no discerning ear for these unusual calls to the kingdom. They had enjoyed exceptional privileges, they had been exalted above others only to reject the Christ. It will be more tolerable, in the day of judgment, for the worldly-minded Phœnicians at Tyre and Sidon, as well as for the proverbially wicked Sodomites, than for these highly favoured but callous urbanites. All this is said for the encouragement of the Seventy, who need not be surprised, if they should meet with similar experiences while on their mission. However, it will be of some comfort to them to know that they are going in the Master's name.

When the Seventy returned from their mission and reported their great success, Jesus hailed it as another indication of the downfall of Satan's kingdom. The overthrow of that kingdom was officially begun a year or two before, when the Messiah prevailed over the tempter, definitely breaking his power and at the same time demonstrating the superiority of spiritual and moral forces over the powers of evil. The fact that the tempter left Jesus for a time only to renew the struggle at a more convenient season clearly indicates that the victory, which has been won, must be progressively realized. In the course of His public ministry Jesus remains victorious over every temptation, never for a moment losing His initial advantage. The tempter's power was definitely broken and his kingdom was on the wane. The casting out of demons by the Messiah, for example, resulted in the advancement of His kingdom and in the consequent break-up and disintegration

of the rule of evil. But this victory over the forces of evil was not achieved by an ordinary individual, but by an ideal representative personality, called the Son of man or the second Adam, whose victory over sin is of fundamental importance to the whole human race, and more particularly to the immediate followers of Jesus. What Jesus had done, His disciples are empowered to do. "The Seventy," we read, "returned again with joy saying, Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in Thy name." But the Master sounds a timely warning against what might eventually issue into vain boasting and spiritual pride over the possession of God-given powers. To glory in charismatic gifts having to do almost exclusively with the healing of the body and mind, is to put a higher premium upon bodily cures than upon the teaching and preaching function of the missionary. Why emphasize that which is merely incidental and collateral in religion to the detriment of that which is primary and fundamental? Preaching and healing go together. Bodily cures without spiritual restoration or the cure of souls would have little or no spiritual value.

While it may be safely assumed that the disciples combined with their preaching the power of healing and of exorcism, Jesus evidently finds it necessary to put them on their guard against the possibility of an undue emphasis upon the charismatic gift of healing and of exorcism. He therefore utters a gentle rebuke, thereby checking by a word of warning and a timely retreat into solitude, their seemingly innocent elation over recent successes attending the use of Christ's name in conjunction with the preaching mission in Peræa. They have yet to learn that successful exorcisms are no guarantee of eternal salvation. "Nevertheless in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Though the disciples may reasonably rejoice at

the success of their exorcisms, there is far greater cause for rejoicing, namely, that their names have been enrolled in the heavenly register of God's elect. Far more indispensable than all charismatic gifts is the grace of God, by which they are saved. Something else is needed besides the power of driving out demons to insure individual salvation. The one exercising such power is not immune to temptation any more than the person from whom the evil power has been ejected. If, in the case of the latter, the vacuum, which has been created by the expulsive power of Christ's name, must be filled with the inner dynamic of an abiding faith in the Son of God, so also must the person exercising a charismatic gift have a saving faith in Jesus Christ before there can be any assurance of eternal salvation. There is no saving merit in being permitted to dispense a charismatic gift. Moral and spiritual power is greater, for without it bodily healing or any other humanitarian effort loses its savour. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus declares, "Many will say unto Me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Thy name, and by Thy name cast out demons, and by Thy name do many wonderful works?" Judas had shared the gift along with the Twelve on their Galilæan mission. He, too, had cast out demons without being able to cast out from his own heart the growing monster of selfishness and earthly ambition. The demon of selfishness finally leaped upon him and overpowered him, driving out from one enjoying great intimacy with Christ, every noble impulse. Judas proved faithless in the end, because he resisted the spiritual influences of a loving and gracious Saviour. In the absence of such a corrective, his faith in Christ soon reached the vanishing point, and he became an easy prey to the sin, which had been lurking in his heart.

Such were the men whom Jesus called and trained for missionary service. Christ's purpose in training them was

not so much that they themselves might be saved but that they might go forth and preach the glad tidings of salvation to others. The ultimate aim and purpose for which they were set apart was that they might share in the glorious mission which Jesus had taken for the great work of His life. The same missionary spirit which characterized the life of the Master is to be the driving dynamic of their future labours. The time came when the disciples were called "apostles," or "missionaries." This title was to serve as a constant reminder of the missionary character of their Christian discipleship; they had been "sent forth" as heralds of the new faith with a definite message from Christ. The title itself incidentally points to the Christian religion as a great missionary enterprise. Christianity is missionary to the core. The missionary impulse cannot be separated from a vital Christianity, and every genuine disciple is at heart a missionary.

How true this is of the early disciples. Under the inspiration of his first interview with Jesus, Andrew, for example, immediately goes in quest of his own brother, because he wants him to share the joy of his momentous discovery. He had made the acquaintance of the first great Missionary, and that was enough to convert him into the first home missionary, with whom in a sense the Christian Church begins. From what we know of him in the Bible, his missionary zeal never abated for one moment; he is always eager to bring somebody to Jesus. In this connection, however, we desire to call special attention to the fact that the missionary method is acquired in a measure long before the trial mission of the Twelve and the Day of Pentecost. To see Jesus and become better acquainted with Him is an experience which, in the very nature of the case, must be shared with others. It is the most natural thing in the world for John, imitating Andrew's example, to go in search of his brother James and

bring him to the Nazarene. There was no special design about it, so far as either Andrew or John were concerned. For Andrew and John to bring their respective brothers to Jesus was an altogether spontaneous act, inherent in the religion of the great Master-Missionary. There was something to be enthusiastic about, and besides, they had caught the glorious contagion of a missionary Personality, whose sole aim it was to propagate the gospel of a universal kingdom beginning, as we know, at Jerusalem and extending in due time unto the uttermost parts of the earth. After Simon Peter and James had made the acquaintance of Jesus through the instrumentality of their brothers, Jesus found Philip and said unto him, "Follow Me." This was a practical demonstration of the missionary method of which we are speaking. From the narrative itself we gather that there was nothing very complicated about it; indeed, we are startled by its simplicity. Jesus, we are told, finds Philip, speaks to him, and Philip becomes a follower of the Prophet of Nazareth.

While this may be a summary statement on the part of the fourth Evangelist (1:43), Philip at any rate was not slow in catching the spirit of it. It was not long before he began to imitate Christ's method by going after his friend Nathanael and saying to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." He put into practice what he had learned from the Master, and perhaps also from Andrew and John, as may be seen from the success of his first evangelistic effort and his skill in dealing with Nathanael. No sooner does a man come under Christ's influence and become a genuine follower of His than he feels at once an earnest desire to propagate the gospel and bring others to Christ. In the case of Matthew the missionary impulse leaps into consciousness as soon as the former tax-collector comes into closer contact with the inspiring per-

sonality of Jesus. His first missionary effort grew out of a desire to bring his old friends and Jesus together, hoping that they might take the step which he had resolved on himself, or that some of them might come under the spell of Christ's influence and give up the old life for a life of greater usefulness. The mission of the Twelve in Galilee and that of the Seventy in Peræa was the natural outgrowth of a similar desire, engendered and kept alive in the hearts of the disciples by the missionary aims and purposes of Jesus. They were potential missionaries from the time of their first interview with the first real Missionary, who took such pains to train and educate them for the work of evangelization at home and abroad.

There are a number of lessons we may learn from the facts already set forth in this chapter. One is that the credentials of the prospective minister or missionary are God-given. If he is to become a genuine evangelizer he must have a divine call. In the case of the Twelve, the call to service comes from Christ. It was a direct, personal call. But the call of the Twelve does not for that reason lose its meaning for our own time, since the call to world-wide missionary service is not exhausted by the Twelve or the Seventy or even the Three Thousand at Pentecost. As a matter of fact none of these groups could go into all the world and preach the gospel to generations yet unborn. And yet who would deny that this is the task of the Christian Church today with her glorious heritage of evangelic truth? In calling the Twelve, Jesus was providing and planning for the future. The work begun by Him was to be carried on and perpetuated by the apostles and their spiritual successors in every age. If the borders of the kingdom are to be enlarged so as to include distant empires, unexplored continents and the people of succeeding generations, then the call of Christ and of His Church must ever go forth, with no uncertain sound, for

an increasing number of apostolic men to carry the gospel to geographical areas hitherto untouched by the apostolic age.

Moreover, the Christian religion is such that the emphasis in all missionary endeavours must be on the thoroughness of the work done. Missionary operations, undertaken on a large scale, are not like a whirlwind political campaign. In Christian missions the work must be both intensive as well as extensive. The whole man must be evangelized and to evangelize a world of men requires more time than was at the disposal of the apostolic Church. If the field is the world, the Master surely could not have meant to limit His call to the Twelve to whom it was originally addressed. As shown by many a parable, Jesus knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that His missionary program could only be progressively realized. His call for workers to continue the work which He had begun, was not a temporary expedient limited to the apostolic age. It is of permanent value and is just as valid today as it was nineteen centuries ago. There is a line of continuity between the first Christian century and our own. The task committed to the Church of apostolic times is just as much our task, and a larger army of apostolic men is needed today than ever before. The onward march of the gospel calls for men, for the best, the strongest and the most heroic men, for the work is just as hard today, if not harder, than it ever was. And who is to do the calling? God in Christ does the calling. Nothing so dignifies and glorifies our lifework as the realization that we have been divinely called and set apart for special service in the Master's kingdom. There is much food for thought in a powerful sermon preached by Horace Bushnell on the theme, "Every man's life a plan of God." If the voice of Old Testament prophecy could say of a heathen emperor by the name of Cyrus, King of Persia, "I have called thee by thy

name. I gird thee, though thou hast not known Me" (Isa. 45:4, 5), then surely you and I have a place in God's plan of salvation. God has a plan for your life and mine. He has a special work for every one of His disciples today. To complete and fill out His framework of redemption, He calls men still; it is that call alone which raises up faithful men for the ministry.

But how shall a man know when God calls, seeing that Christ is no longer in the flesh? That all Christians are called in a general way to some form of Christian service is clear enough, but how shall a young man recognize the call of God to special service? The consciousness of it may flash upon his soul with all the certainty of a prophetic call, or it may gradually dawn and grow upon him in the course of his Christian experience by providential means, by the opening of the door of opportunity, by the consciousness of a gift pointing to the ministry as a life-work, by the conviction of conscience, or the advice of a trusted friend. The ministerial call, as previously remarked, may come in one of a number of ways. To the average young man of today this adds to the difficulty of recognizing such a call as divine when it comes. Like the youth Samuel in the temple at Shiloh, he is unable to distinguish the voice of God from that of a mere man. But the voice and its meaning was interpreted, as we know, by a man of maturer years and larger experience in the person of Eli. The youth of today is in need of an interpreter, and who is better qualified to act in such a capacity than his own pastor? Let him take his difficulties and perplexities to his pastor or some other qualified person, and the voice of God and its meaning will become plain. Better still, let every pastor make clear to his Sunday-school scholars, to his catechetical classes, in his ministrations in the sanctuary and in his pastoral work during the week, the practical meaning of the call to the ministry. To a

man of initiative and hallowed common sense, opportunities will not be lacking for throwing whatever light he may have upon a perplexing subject. The Epistle and Gospel lessons of the Church Year readily lend themselves to such interpretations in the presence of the entire congregation. There is no lack of opportunity for presenting this theme, no matter what series of Scripture lessons the pastor may be using. Thus, in many cases, the home of the boy is reached through some of his relatives and friends in the congregation; sometimes the boy himself is reached. And as in every well organized parish the Sunday-school or Church-school is an integral part of church life, the pastor has an excellent opportunity of establishing contacts that will be helpful to the growing boy. Sometimes the reticent boy, who would shrink from a personal interview with his pastor, can best be reached by his Sunday-school teacher or perhaps by the Sunday-school superintendent, the Scout-master, the manager of the baseball or basketball team or the councilor at the summer camp.

At all events, this type of boy needs looking after, and the pastor will do well to cultivate his acquaintance and get his confidence. He reminds us of the young man who was to guide the destinies of Israel. When Samuel and the men of Israel "sought him, he could not be found," and so the search was continued, until they found him "hiding among the stuff" (I Sam. 10:21,22). Saul was a natural born leader; he possessed, among other things, a splendid physique. "When he stood among the people, he was higher than any of them. And Samuel said unto all the people, See ye him, whom the Lord hath chosen!" (10:23, 24). Shyness on his part was no disqualification for leadership any more than it is in the youth of today, who is talkative enough on most subjects but exceedingly reticent in spiritual matters. His diffidence, like that of Moses and Jeremiah, must in some way be overcome by

the patient pastor or the persevering friend, otherwise men who are born to lead and to win souls for the kingdom will remain hidden "among the stuff" of a perishing world. The pastor, of all men, is most competent to seek him out, for he may be the very young man "whom the Lord hath chosen." If there is any doubt about his qualifications, let the pastor follow the example of the perplexed Israelites and "inquire of the Lord" (I Sam. 10:22), and the Lord of the unreaped harvest will answer him, so that he may be able to find the right kind of labourers or, to change the figure, let him remember what the Master said to the fishermen, "I will make you fishers of men." In due time the Master will enable some of these very boys to become fishers of men. But before the Master can do that, somebody has to find the young men, "whom the Lord hath chosen" and called for special service.

Search had to be made for Saul until he was found. According to the book of Jonah, God sought out the hiding place of the prophet and sent him forth on his errand to the people of Nineveh. But the problem of finding men of the right sort for the Christian ministry is not so simple for the reason that God in the vast majority of cases works out His plans through human agency. It is instructive to note, in this connection, that of the Twelve, Jesus is said to have gained Philip and Matthew, while Peter was brought to Christ by Andrew, James by John, Nathanael by Philip, and credit must be given to John the Baptist for pointing John and Andrew to One greater than himself. Who had gained the others is not expressly stated. However, it is reasonable to suppose that some of the latter were won by the disciples themselves. Experience proves that God usually works through human instrumentality in making His call known to men. God does the choosing and the calling; there is no doubt about that. But the call to the kingship was brought home to Saul's consciousness

by the men of Israel, who "ran and fetched him" from his hiding place. With us today, though we would not presume to put any limitations to God's direct intervention in the case of some of His unwilling prophets, many men whom the Lord has truly called are won for the ministry through human instrumentality. There is all the more reason for seeking them out with all diligence, because the Lord has chosen them for the work of the ministry. We must search for them and bring them to Jesus, remembering the example of John the Baptist and of the three disciples mentioned above. Jesus will be the best Judge of their fitness for special service. These men had made no mistake in bringing Peter, James and Nathanael to Christ. And—be it remarked in passing—it is no reflection upon Jesus that Judas was numbered for a time among the Twelve, for at the time of his selection and call, Satan had not as yet entered into his heart; that happened later toward the close of nearly three years of training for full apostolic service.

This, however, does not justify the modern disciple of Jesus in slackening his efforts to find recruits for the ministry. The question of their fitness can be more readily determined with the unfolding of their character and the progress of their religious education. In the case of the growing boy, the period of preparation leading to ministerial service—generally the high school, the college and the seminary course—will be sufficient ordinarily for a sympathetic study of his qualifications before the average congregation will be called upon by the proper authorities, in case of a pastoral vacancy, to put the stamp of its approval upon his qualifications for ministerial service by declaring that he will be acceptable to them for the work of the ministry. By electing and calling him to the vacant pastorate the congregation bears testimony to its conviction that the young man, who has preached to them, has a

divine call. As a further safeguard to the flock against the possible intrusion of men "whom the Lord has not sent," both the call of the local congregation and the qualifications of the candidate in question are carefully gone into by the synod which ordains him. Although no one would be sanguine enough to regard the present system as perfect, it is encouraging to know that many who are not called to this high office can be weeded out from the ranks both before and after ordination by synod. That mistakes can be made under the present system is no reason for becoming cynical about the call to the ministry. We cannot afford to part with our conviction that God does call men for ministerial service, whatever difficulties we may have in recognizing some of the characteristic tokens of it in the individual boy. The real difficulty is not with the call or even with the boy himself; the real difficulty is with ourselves: we must study the boy and find out how manifold are the workings of divine grace in the lives of individuals.

The call is not always the same in every individual case. If the pastor is to help the boy wrestling with the problem of his lifework, his sympathies must be deep and broad enough to understand boy-life. In studying the qualifications of his boys he will discover that some of them are fitted for the ministry while others—perhaps the great majority—are better qualified for a business career, and in giving advice he will be candid, honest and fair with each of them for the sake of all concerned. But the surprising feature of such a study will be that, to all appearances, God had been calling more boys than were conscious of it at the time. The possession of the necessary qualifications in their case proves the call. God never calls a man to ministerial service without equipping him for the work. All they needed was a faithful interpreter of the divine call and the meaning of life. And since it is not unlikely

that God may be calling some to ministerial service who are not yet fully conscious of it, let no young man with the proper qualifications definitely decide what his lifework is to be without first considering the claims of the Christian ministry. There is no calling in life which enables a man more fully to focus all his God-given powers upon the work of the Lord. It is not the easiest nor the most lucrative work that you might undertake, but it is the most heroic and the most worth-while. The greatness of the work is not to be exaggerated. To catch men in the net of the gospel and wrestle with immortal souls—what an arduous but glorious task! How immeasurably above all callings is such a lifework! Your quest for souls may not meet with immediate success; the returns may be meagre for a time. But remember you will accomplish some good in the world. As in the case of the disciples, the Master has doubtless chosen some of you "and appointed you that ye should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (John 15:16).

How are we to distinguish the call to Christian service from the many voices that are calling us to positions of material gain and comfort? The call of the world makes its appeal to every selfish interest known to man. But the best criterion of a genuine call to the ministry is the element of sacrifice which enters into it. To undertake such work really means that a man must be willing to exchange the lesser things of life for the privileges of Christian discipleship. If the call is to be recognized as genuine there must be sacrifice in it. There is no room in the apostolic college for the man who is unwilling to sacrifice something for Christ. To the scribe who has his eye on temporal rewards, Jesus says, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head" (Matt. 8:20). The disciples left everything they had—their temporal possessions, their homes,

their employment—and followed Jesus. The fishermen had something to lose. They left their nets and boats by which they had their living. They did not enter into any worldly calculations as to their future maintenance. To them life was more than merely "making a living"; they were far more interested in the prospect of fishing for men's souls than in casting the net into the lake. Gladly did they yield what little they had in the way of earthly possessions to this higher form of service. It was not the promise of an earthly throne or of a full money bag that attracted them. Christ never misrepresented things. They knew that the call to service meant hard uphill work and that they were facing a life of self-denial. But they were ready to make any sacrifice, because they had faith in Christ and in His cause. The same spirit of self-sacrifice prompted Matthew to leave the toll-booth and follow Jesus, for whose sake he was willing to risk everything. For Levi-Matthew the call meant the surrender of the comfort and the certainty of his worldly calling for the uncertainty and the poverty of a ministry modelled after that of the Master Himself. To qualify for definite Christian service, he relinquished his secular occupation and emoluments, preferring a Christ-proclaimed gospel to the jingle of Roman coins. "And he left all, rose up and followed Him."

The disciple of today can do no less. Anything short of this is a disqualification for ministerial service. Wealthy young men of the "Rich Young Ruler" type are not fit candidates for the ministry. They lack one thing—the spirit of true discipleship. It is the age-long story of Mammon and God, the god of riches being given the preference. When Jesus calls to men of this type for the surrender of the last barrier to full service, they "go away sorrowful," preferring their miserable possessions to the priceless treasures of the kingdom. In that case, to be

well to do here is to be eternally poor yonder. The pursuit of riches is a dangerous thing when it keeps a man from following the call of Jesus to a higher service and a nobler work; it called Judas away from the side of Jesus Christ to become a traitor. No; a so-called clean life and average respectability are no substitute for a life of self-surrender to the will of God. The disposition to serve others is not acquired on the way to "Wall Street," but on the way to Calvary. The response of Jesus to the call of God was self-sacrificing. He preferred poverty to a life of ease in order that He might be among us as "One that serves." He asked for no sacrifice that He was not willing to make Himself. If it was required of the disciples that they should leave home, He had already met that requirement at the commencement of His public ministry by leaving the home in Nazareth. Following His example, John and James left their father Zebedee in the boat, with the hired servants, Simon left his home in Capernaum, and the other disciples did likewise. To them, Jesus of Nazareth was the most important Person that ever lived; far more important than home and kindred, relatives and friends. There is a higher duty than that of being subject to one's parents, whether they happen to live in Nazareth or elsewhere. Though we love our parents, our relatives and friends, we must love Him more, since He is nearer to us than any or all of these. When Jesus calls to special service, there must be no divided allegiance, for "he that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37-38). There are better things than money and perishable goods. There is a higher duty than that we owe to home and kindred, and the sacrifice that a man is prepared to make for the cause of Christ shows up the man.

But why speak of sacrifice when the loss of a few paltry things—our earthly possessions—involves the greatest possible gain! We lose our boats and nets and leave our home and win Christ. Of all the disciples, Matthew possibly made the greatest sacrifice. But so far from being depressed by the loss of every earthly prospect, he anoints himself, as it were, "with the oil of gladness" by arranging a feast in Christ's honour for the purpose of showing his old colleagues that he was about to serve One greater than Cæsar or his fawning creature—Herod Antipas. He was called away from the pursuit of riches to become a follower of Jesus Christ. He became poorer in a sense, and yet gained immeasurably by the exchange. By forsaking all to follow Christ, he lost a profitable calling, but found a noble manhood and a life pre-eminently worth while. The disciples lost nothing; they gained everything. Blessed—thrice blessed—are we, if our history can be summed up in "He called them unto Him and they came." Earthly things must not keep us back from following Him. There is sure to be something in the way of a ready compliance with the Master's call. Something will have to be given up. Let us be prepared for this, counting "all things but loss for the excellency of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Another lesson of practical value to be gleaned from the foregoing observations is that if the call is to become effective it must be obeyed. Jesus called and "they followed Him." The effectual call leads to discipleship. The one called must obey the call and become a follower of the great Teacher. Without such obedience there can be no discipleship. If the disciple is to learn of Jesus, he must follow Him in His daily wanderings as He moves about among the people, dispensing the means of grace, or retires to the mountain-top in order to be alone with God and His chosen disciples. In their case, the effectual call does not

actually begin until they leave all and follow Him. From that time on we may speak of them, in a very real sense, as Christ's followers. In keeping with oriental methods of teaching, they literally followed Jesus from place to place, for only in this way could they appropriate His teachings, study His methods, learn to appreciate His ideals and motives and catch the glorious inspiration of His matchless Personality.

The words, "Follow Me," suggest the idea of fellowship as an essential condition of discipleship. The primary purpose of the call was that the disciples "should be with Him" constantly and learn of Him. The disciple, then, is a "follower," and to follow Jesus means constant association and unbroken fellowship with the greatest educator that the world has ever seen. To be endowed with great natural talents and capacities is excellent, but these gifts in themselves do not make the disciple. A full college or university course is highly desirable, but that spiritual force which is so indispensable to the prospective minister can be acquired only through day-by-day fellowship with Christ, listening to His words, witnessing His deeds and sharing His trials and temptations. No man is fit for Christian service who has not had some training with the Lord Himself. It is absolutely necessary for him to enter the school of the Master, that his powers may be developed, and last, but not least, that he may become more and more like Christ Himself. This is only another way of saying that the disciple, whether in the time of Jesus or in our own day, must be a Christian before he can engage in Christian work. The task of becoming like Christ would overwhelm us were it not for the enabling power of the call of Jesus. Moreover, it is a source of comfort to know that the task of becoming like Him is to be progressively realized in the school of Christ. Our inability to measure up to the perfect stature of the Master is no

disqualification for service any more than in the case of the disciples themselves. Relying upon the sustaining power of God's grace, they did a wonderful work. Their connection with Jesus has immortalized the Eleven. The limitations and imperfections of human nature did not prevent them from reflecting in their lives the reflected glory of Christ's character. Though far from perfect themselves, they were reflections of the perfect Christ as He was the reflection of God the Father and of His love for humanity.

Surely some progress can be made on our part in a similar direction by our willingness to enter the school of Christ, consecrating whatever talents God has given us and putting them at the Master's disposal. And should He honour any of you with a call to the ministry, you may depend upon it that He will multiply and increase these talents for God-given ends. Remember that the closeness of your personal following of Christ is the measure of your power for ministerial service. To be much with Jesus is the best preparation for service. A degree from an institution of higher learning can never take the place of this kind of training, nor is it enough for a man to know all about the Bible; he must know his Bible and he must know Christ by constant fellowship with Him. But we cannot follow some extremists, who despise human learning, because the disciples never had a preliminary arts course; this is nothing short of fanaticism. God wants us to have the best possible training for our lifework and that, in addition to the spiritual factor involved, virtually means a full college and seminary course. However, we do affirm that the wisdom of the schools is of little value without faith in the living Christ and close fellowship with Him. This element of spiritual communion cannot be dispensed with by the ministerial student. Only thus can he hope to imitate Christ in his work of preaching and healing.

This being with Jesus, it will be noted in the next place, is not for the purpose of mere introspection or speculation on theological themes. The disciples were directed to follow Christ that they might be sent forth to preach. They have a mission to perform. They are to meet a practical need, and the time will come when they are to be commissioned for service. But how are they to meet that need? They are hardly conscious as yet of any ability to preach the gospel. To meet this difficulty they are reminded of the enabling power of the call of Christ. With the Master's call to follow Him there goes the sure promise, "I will enable you to become fishers of men." The peerless Preacher will teach them how to preach and then send them forth on their first trial mission with the net of the gospel, so that they might acquire, in a practical way, the art of preaching by putting into practice some of the things they have learned from the Master. Reference has been made to the enabling power of the call. We might also speak, with equal propriety, of the enabling power of the Master's commissioning voice. "How shall they preach unless they be sent?" My friend, if you cannot preach, the Master will teach you how. The very name "apostle" suggested to the disciple that he was to be a missionary in the broadest sense of the term. In like manner the prospective minister is a missionary with a definite message to his fellowmen. Let him go forth, then, and deliver his message, knowing that the Master's commission to preach is sufficient authority, conferring upon the one commissioned the power to preach, provided he will stir up the gift entrusted to him.

But if the disciple of Jesus is to practice his Master's art and win men for the kingdom, he must have an adequate motive. What is the controlling motive in the preaching activity of Jesus? He dines with Matthew and his friends out of loving regard for lost sinners. It was not long

before the Pharisees appeared on the scene, misinterpreting His motives and challenging the propriety of His course of action. In replying to His critics, Jesus incidentally points to the purpose of His coming to earth by comparing Himself to a Psysician, whose duty it was to heal the sick. A pitying and sympathizing Saviour cannot help saving all such as are conscious of their lost condition. To do so is divine; it is like God the Father Himself, whose great heart of love He had come to reveal. The Pharisees have yet to learn that love to God and man is a very essential part of religion, whether in Old or New Testament days. Loving sympathy to those in need is the fundamental requirement of the law and the prophets. Let them ponder the meaning of Hosea 6:6, where the prophet virtually says, " Merciful love I desire and a practical knowledge of God that prompts a man to loving deeds rather than the giving of things for sacrificial purposes." Whatever one does must spring from a loving heart. A man cannot be religious, or have faith in God, without this loving attitude to those in need. Jesus elsewhere speaks of religion in terms of faith as an attitude toward God. But faith in God cannot be adequately expressed in acts of worship and devotion. There is a man-to-man relation in religion, and since religion is not to be thought of without its human relationships, we may show our love to God by loving our fellowmen. This love finds expression in the human sphere in which God has placed us.

By throwing the emphasis on the inner motive of the heart, Jesus simplifies religion, disentangling that which is really essential from a mass of secondary details and duties. In the light of that interpretation the way for the Christian is clear; in all that he does he must be actuated by love, which is the first and last commandment. Jesus calls it the new commandment which, when applied to religion and life, renders all other commandments unneces-

sary. Love does not stop with the literal fulfilment of the law; it goes beyond it. If asked to go one mile, the Christian will go two, and his motive for doing so is love. The love of Christ is the only adequate motive for service. It lies at the basis of all missionary effort. In His tour of Galilee, Jesus visited the cities and towns in that thickly populated district, spending His time in ceaseless journeys, and that not for selfish reasons but for love's sake, to win immortal souls for the kingdom. It was compassion for the multitude that led Jesus to send out the Twelve that they might supplement His missionary efforts in Galilee and come to the aid of a neglected people suffering for lack of a true shepherd's care. The Saviour's compassion was not a mere sentiment as so frequently with us; it moved Him to preach and to send out others to teach the way of salvation. His self-denying love for souls was too great to permit Him to leave them to their fate. There was a crying need which had to be met; it touched His heart and moved Him to corresponding action. In the face of all this spiritual destitution He simply had to do something to rescue those who were in dire distress. He cannot do otherwise. There is a compelling motive in all that He does for humanity, and that is His merciful and compassionate love.

How unlike that poor, pulseless, throbless thing which is sometimes called love in ordinary life, but which is nothing more than cheap sentiment. There are those who feel sorry for the unchurched masses at home and for the unevangelized masses abroad, and yet they do nothing to make Christ known by helping to spread the gospel. They are like a stalled engine; there is no power to move them from within; there is no driving dynamic, no constraining power. Their love for everybody but themselves is cold and dead. Love as a sentiment they know, but there is no sacrifice in it. They have no heart for the needy, no yearning compassion for lost souls, and that is why, in this mis-

sionary age, many so-called Christians are interested in none of these things. There are urban centres, having more than a proportionate share of churches, where missionary activities are confined to the pastor and a few faithful women. The truth of the matter is that with the abounding of churches there may yet be a famine of the Word of God, for want of Christian men and women filled with the missionary spirit. The spring of every missionary endeavour is compassion for souls. The man who is not moved by such a motive to Christ-like action needs to question very seriously whether he loves the Lord at all, and has any right to be called a Christian. For is not every Christian really a fruit of the Saviour's compassion for the perishing? How, then, can we escape the same constraining power as a motive for true Christ-like service? Christ's love for us ought to awaken some response in these dull hearts of ours. To the Christian it has constraining power, " for the love of Christ constraineth us."

To visualize the needs of others, it is necessary to regard the multitudes not as the multiplication of so many economic units or mere " hands." What did Jesus see as He looked out upon the teeming multitudes? So many impersonal units, like the employees of a large industrial plant, who are known to the management as number so and so? No; He views them not as the coldly calculating representatives of big business which has lost the human touch, but as human personalities with immortal souls. His sympathy and tenderness extends to every individual soul in that mass of humanity. This explains why He wants the Twelve and later on the Seventy and all His followers everywhere, to help Him reach the individual soul, which is so infinitely precious in God's sight. The people may have an economic value to a man bent on exploiting his fellowmen for material returns. Such heartless calculations are foreign to the mind and spirit of Jesus, who is

supremely interested in spiritual values. To be sure, He feeds the hungry multitudes, as we are told, with the loaves and fishes, but only after feeding them, for days at a time, with the Bread of Life. Jesus views man in the totality of his being. His Gospel is no one-sided gospel. He is no Bread-King, neither is Christianity so "other-worldly" and so spiritual as to be impractical so far as this world is concerned. Jesus meets every need. At times He ministered to the body as well as the soul. But there is a decided emphasis on the spiritual function of Christianity. Priority must be given to soul-values, because they are by far the more important. By making the kingdom of God our first concern all other human relationships—social, political and economic—will find their proper adjustment. The kingdom within is more fundamental and basic than the kingdom without, and the state of the soul and of the religious life is of far greater concern to Jesus than the physical needs of His countrymen.

When He saw the multitudes His great heart heaved with emotion at the sight of a spiritually prostrate people. There may have been many among them, who had come to be healed of their physical infirmities; others there may have been, who were mentally afflicted, but the thing that affected Jesus most of all was the sad spiritual condition of the people He loved. In that same multitude some may have been in a holiday-mood, buoyant with pleasurable excitement; they are the physically fit, they are well-fed and well-clad, and yet this outer show of prosperity was no index of their spiritual condition. To the eye of Jesus, they, too, were like shepherdless sheep scattered over the bleak scenes of human selfishness, spiritual ignorance and guilt. His penetrating gaze pierced the outer surface of things to the soul within, and He pitied every one of them, because He loved them personally and individually. The great Shepherd will continue to call His wandering sheep

back to the fold of God and shower His love upon them to His dying day. Such love, though crucified, "will draw all men unto Him." It is the only hope of the world. Without it we are lost—utterly lost and swallowed up by this awful deluge of human sin and guilt. Though men are bound together by human ties and crowded together in populous cities, their benighted, sin-cursed souls are scattered and lost, unless the Master's pitying cry for perishing humanity finds an echo in the hearts of His followers and stirs them to action. This is the test of true discipleship.

But before the disciples can be sent forth on their mission of preaching and healing, the compassion which they feel in their hearts for the spiritual prostration of their people must first lead to prayer for the right kind of under-shepherds who will seek the scattered sheep, or, changing the figure, for suitable labourers to gather in the spiritual harvest. Earnest petition and prayer, which is in sympathy with the missionary aims of Jesus, prepares for service and, therefore, precedes action. Christ's compassion moved Him to prayer and the disciples are bidden to pray as a preparation for work similar to His own. In His progress through Galilee, Jesus discovered the greatness of the work and the fewness of the workers, on account of which He now appeals to His disciples. He emphasizes the need of earnest, intercessory prayer that labourers may be raised up and "thrust forth" into a harvest of waiting souls. The people were flocking to the good Shepherd because those who should have taught and led them were "blind guides" (Matt. 23:16). They were ready to hear the Gospel, but could not for lack of unselfish labourers. The efficiency of the labourers that are needed depends upon their being good pastors who know how to shepherd the flock of God. Pastors with an evangelic message are needed to replace the conventional rabbis appointed by law and not impelled by love. But how shall

preachers of this type be secured? The only remedy for this deficiency of labourers is prayer flowing from a true Christ-like compassion for souls, which must be so intense as to move them to carry up their desires to God. Our hope for Christian missions lies in the providing power of God, who alone can qualify and commission labourers for a harvest of immortal souls.

But why are the labourers so few at the time of Christ's missionary tour in Galilee, as well as before and after that time? Why has the Lord of the harvest failed to provide an adequate supply of workers for His vast mission field? Is it through lack of compassion for His creatures? Christ's compassion proves the contrary. Do we not read somewhere that "God so loved the world" that He gave to a world of perishing humanity His only-begotten Son? And yet the startling fact remains that Jesus urges His disciples to pray for workers before sending them out to preach the gospel. Why did Jesus remind His disciples of the necessity of prayer as a preparation for service? Because God needed to be reminded of the sad disproportion between the work and the workers? If that were the case it would be far more becoming for Jesus to do that. The Son of God was in constant communion with the Father. He did pray, but He also wanted the disciples to pray. Why? Because God works through human agency. This accounts for the appalling disproportion between the vastness of the work and the fewness of the labourers. It is not through lack of interest on the part of God. He is ready to reap the harvest as soon as the reapers are ready. The fact is men are free agents, and hence the labourers that have been called to labour in the vineyard have often been languid and remiss in their missionary endeavours, and the result is that vast stretches of the harvest field remain unreaped. God coerces no man. Though omnipotent and all-powerful, the only omnipo-

tence that God will bring to bear upon His prospective labourers is the omnipotence of divine love. If that fails, God's program for world-wide evangelization fails likewise. Men must be moved to pray for missions out of love for their fellowmen. There is always some unwillingness to overcome, if not on the part of the original Twelve, at least on the part of the average Christian.

And so far as the human factor in prayer is concerned, we are not so sure that the stimulating effect of intercessory prayer was unnecessary even in the case of the members of the apostolic band, especially with Judas among them. Nor is Peter, the spokesman of the Twelve, altogether beyond the need of such prayer, as may be seen from the question which he asks in Matthew 19:27. The thought of compensating rewards disappears in a prayer which breathes the spirit of self-denying love. Such love asks for no reward other than the coveted opportunity of being sent out by the Master with a message that will meet every need. The need in Galilee is not sufficient to convert the disciples into missionaries. But when they see and feel the Master's yearning compassion for hungry souls their hearts are touched and they, too, begin to wrestle with God in intercessory prayer. And now, after wrestling with God and themselves, they are in sympathy with the Master's plans, and Jesus not long thereafter sends forth on a mission of mercy the very men whom He had moved to pray. Would the ministry ever lack for suitable candidates, if the Church yearned over men's souls in intercessory prayer, and constantly kept before her young people the sense of obligation to consecrate every God-given talent to His service? The preaching office is of the utmost importance for the well-being of the Church. A supply of faithful ministers will be available as soon as the conducting rods of prayer rise up into the region of divine influences and of the desires of God; they must

point in the direction of God's will, and His will is that all men should be saved. The disciple must pray for more disciples; the preacher for more preachers; and not only preachers, but all Christians, should intercede for the unsaved as Jesus and the disciples interceded for them. Those engaged in the work are to be the chief intercessors for more workers. While it is the duty of every true preacher to be on the constant lookout for more preachers, the burden of securing an adequate supply of men rests on every labourer in the Master's vineyard, whether lay or clerical. Love for souls and prayer in their behalf will prepare many a praying disciple to respond to the call for more labourers in a field that waves wide and perishing over all the earth.

Genuine compassion for perishing men will naturally lead to prayer for more labourers. This kind of prayer ought much oftener to form a vital part of our public and private supplications. A pitying and interceding Saviour and a group of disciples earnestly praying for more labourers ought to fill our hearts with shame, when we think of the weak, dull, hollow, formal, loveless and meaningless prayers that are uttered by a host of lip-servants and nominal Christians, who have the name that they are living but, lo, they are dead and cold to the crying needs of a perishing world. Can it be possible that any man who is called of God to devote himself to preaching the gospel should accord but scant consideration to the Master's appeal for loving intercession in the interests of a work transcending local parish lines? Can a Christian be a true disciple without feeling a tender concern for the millions who are perishing both in our own country and in other lands? Who can think of the teeming multitudes in foreign countries as well as of the pagans in our own land without exclaiming, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few"?

Though labourers have greatly multiplied since the days of Christ, the supply of workers is entirely out of all proportion to the number of souls waiting to be reaped. Never was so large a harvest field open for the sickle as in our own day. Ripening fields call for more labourers, but the needed workers are still few in proportion to the demand. There need be no attempt on the part of the workers in this field to restrict the workers to a favoured few in order to keep down competition. In Christian work the immigrant from foreign lands is just as welcome as the home-born. Christ never wrote any exclusion acts into the constitution of His kingdom. He did say, "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, but rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This limitation, however, was confined to the trial mission in Galilee, and was subsequently removed by the command to "go into all the world and make disciples of all nations." The missionary program of Jesus, viewed as a whole, has no room for "favoured nation" clauses, or preferential treatment for either Jew or Gentile. Narrow-mindedness and jealousy have no place in a message which is intended for the entire human family. The desire in the world to limit and regulate the number of workers to keep up wages, if applied to Christianity, would be downright treason to both God and man. Men's spiritual needs are so great, the field is so immense and the harvest of souls so enormous, that as many workers as can possibly be equipped are needed for the work, and it is our duty to pray for more workers. The supply of workers has always been deficient and the available material never catches up to the demand, owing to the individual equation in human nature. Human selfishness must be overcome, and the only way to overcome it is to wrestle with God and ourselves with a flaming passion for souls, and the way will be open for the progressive realization of the missionary aims of Jesus. The need

for more workers is exceedingly urgent; they will not be secured unless we learn to pray in the spirit of Jesus and with true apostolic zeal, firmly believing that the Lord of the harvest will hear our prayers and grant our requests. God alone can endow the workers with the necessary gifts, inspire them with generous aims and send them forth on glorious and triumphant missions.

There is still another lesson of great practical value that cannot be overlooked in our present discussion, and that is the matter of Christian stewardship. Prayer is a stewardship. But how provincial is the attitude of many of us toward this solemn commitment. To limit our prayers to the asking of favours for ourselves and our loved ones is a kind of selfish beggary. The sphere of interest in which such petitions move is the immediate family, our own flesh and blood, our own kinsmen. What a narrow outlook on life and what a commentary on our own selfishness! What of the great human family and its crying needs, especially in the domain of religion? This is not intercessory prayer at all; it is selfishness disguised as piety. But how stimulating to heart and mind is intercessory prayer! It lends dignity to our lives, enlarges our sympathies, broadens our vision and widens the circle of responsibility in which we move. By praying for India, Africa, China or Japan we will want to learn more about the country and people for whom we are praying. And so, when the Macedonian cry is heard, the interceding disciple is ready to go to his modern "Galilee," all things being equal, of course. The remarkable thing about intercessory prayer is that the interceding disciple ordinarily becomes a candidate for appointment as God's messenger, because of his willingness to respond to the call of service. Loving intercession prepares for service.

Attention has been called in the preceding paragraphs to the importance of prayer as a preparation for service.

The emphasis upon prayer at this stage of the apostles' training grew out of the discovery of a great spiritual need in their native province. Compassion for the multitude leads Jesus and the disciples to pray that the need might soon be met and, strange to say, the prayer of the interceding disciples is followed by their first soul-winning campaign in Galilee. Was it a mere coincidence, or was the sending out of the Seventy at a later date the fruit of that prayer? It may be that the men who were sent to Peræa were among Christ's followers at this time; but still there is some warrant for thinking that the mission of the Twelve is no less a fruit of this prayer than the subsequent mission of the Seventy. The disciples interceded for Galilee and Jesus sent them out on their first trial mission; they continued to pray and others caught the spirit of that intercessory prayer, and they, too, began to pray, with the result that the Seventy were commissioned to preach in Peræa. The only point that we want to bring out here is that there is a connection between prayer and missionary activity. The compassionate love of Jesus, as we have seen, was no mere sentiment. It moved Him to action; it was a powerful motive urging and driving the disciples to intercessory prayer. But loving intercession is not enough, for it is the nature of true love to do something to show its true worth. Protestations of love must be backed up by loving deeds; promises and good intentions are worthless without corresponding action. And so, in the spiritual realm, action must follow prayer. Christ's "Pray ye" is converted into "Go ye." Prayer is not the culmination of discipleship; that is reached in the call to service. Prayer, to be sure, takes us to the lofty heights of intercession, of spiritual aspiration and communion with God, but it also sends us down to the valley of human need, where the call to service cannot be consistently refused. The disciple of today must learn to pray and not shrink from the apos-

tolic implications of earnest and persistent prayer. He must work as well as pray. This is the culminating point of Christian discipleship. The steps leading up to it are compassionate love, loving intercession and loving service. This is the apostolic sequence and the great impelling motive in the whole process is love—the kind of love that will not shrink from any sacrifice for the sake of Christ and His kingdom.

But, as already intimated, there is also a subsidiary motive in Christian service, growing out of the motive of love. It is the motive of stewardship, to which Jesus appeals in sending out the Twelve on their Galilæan mission. The gift of healing with which they have been endowed, is to be regarded by them as a sacred trust over which they have no absolute property rights. They are like stewards who must give an account to their Master for the way in which they have administered the property entrusted to them. The things committed to their charge have been given them for administrative purposes. What they have received is not for them to keep, but to pass on to others on the principle that "Freely ye have received, freely give." This principle, applying originally to the stewardship of healing sickness and casting out demons extends to every form of spiritual and material endowment. An excellent comment on these words, illustrating how the principle works out in human life, is found in the paradoxical saying of Jesus in Matthew 10:39, "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it," or, as Luke 17:33 has it, "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." The primary meaning of the saying is that the man who in time of persecution or danger denies Christ to save his earthly life loses eternal life, and the confessor who loses his bodily, temporal life out of loyalty to Christ's cause gains the higher spiritual or

eternal life. The self-seeker may gain a world, but he loses his own soul; he sacrifices the higher spiritual life to the lower sense-life of the body and, therefore, comes to grief sooner or later. The ultimate outcome of self-seeking is self-ruin. The law of the kingdom is self-sacrifice, not as an end in itself, but for the sake of the well-being of others and the honour of God. This is the purpose and goal of the Christian life. Every phase of it is a stewardship to be exercised for the good of others. The Christian steward gains the highest life and happiness by being faithful to his trust and not by regarding as his own the powers and rights delegated to him by the divine Sovereign. The old self-life with its insistence upon the pagan philosophy of getting and keeping must be abandoned and Christ and His cause must be paramount.

We hear a great deal in these days about the rights of man, and never a word is said in some quarters about the rights of God. Men wax warm and eloquent when they speak about absolute property rights and individual ownership, but the ardour manifested in such discussions approaches the freezing-point the moment an attempt is made to consider the subject from a Biblical angle. Evidently men do not get their ideas of ownership from the Bible. We will concede at once that property in the sense of absolute ownership is now regarded as a well established principle in the dominant law codes of western civilization. But any keen student of economic history will probably be clever enough to venture the guess that this idea of ownership was written into our law codes by the lawgiver among the nations, that is to say, by pagan Rome under the impact and influence of a powerful chain of Roman colonies distributed over the most strategical parts of Europe. The literature on the subject shows that imperial Rome was the first among the nations of the West to arrive at the idea of absolute private property, so that a man could do with his

property almost as he pleased. However, this is not to be a study of comparative jurisprudence or of economic history, but merely a brief digression for the sake of pointing out whence came the idea of property which is so current today in the world of business. Though it is correct in a sense to say that it originated in the selfish nature of man, the historical truth is that pre-Christian Rome first developed and codified it and then gave it to her colonies in Britain, France, Germany, Austria, Spain and elsewhere. In course of time it was woven into the fabric of the "Holy Roman Empire," and subsequently, by degrees, of course, it found a place in the law codes of western civilization. We make these statements not for revolutionary purposes, God forbid; but simply that the truth in this regard may be more generally known, and the truth shall make us free by its own inherent power. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). All that we want to make clear is that according to the law of Cæsar men may speak of the absolute rights of individual property, but not according to the law of God. The former regards practically all possessions, with minor exceptions, such as lands reserved for public purposes, as the absolute property of the individual, or at best the family in a very narrow sense; whereas the latter speaks of things temporal and spiritual in terms of stewardship or trusteeship. The Bible has nothing to say about the absolute rights of man, but it does make some definite pronouncements on the rights of God. Among these are the following: "The world is Mine and the fulness thereof" (Ps. 50:12). Both heaven and earth are the Lord's (Deut. 10:14); He has created them (Gen. 1). "The land is Mine" (Lev. 25:23). "The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Hag. 2:8). "Every beast of the forest is Mine and the cattle upon a thousand hills" (Ps. 50:10).

God is the rightful Owner of the soil and of all things. Such divine ownership excludes the idea of absolute proprietorship so far as man is concerned. The latter is a temporary occupant or lessee of his Lord's estate; he is a steward or trustee and in no sense a real owner or proprietor. He cannot secure title to property held in trust and no Title Insurance or Trust Company on earth is qualified to give it. Human law may allow it, but divine law does not sanction such transactions, and for all that man can do, the time will come when they will be revoked. The Bible plainly teaches that the individual holder of any portion of God's property is a steward who manages the property so entrusted, and possesses it for a time; but he does not own it; mere possession is not ownership. "And if thou say in thy heart, My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth, then thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deut. 8:17-18). God alone gives the increase; He "gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). He is "the Giver of every good and perfect gift" (James 1:17). He is no hard Master; He is the great Giver who gives unceasingly from the storehouse of an infinite realm. Nor is He an arbitrary despot or a selfish plutocrat, living on the unearned increment of His vast domains. Jesus says, "My Father worketh even until now and I work" (John 5:17). God works and Jesus works, and we "are workers together with God" (II Cor. 6:1). How unselfishly has our God been toiling for countless ages, husbanding the resources and treasures of heaven and earth, not for His own benefit but for the good of His creatures. He is the only creative Worker, the source of life and of every spiritual and material blessing. "He giveth to all life and breath and all things" (Acts 17:25). "He that spared not His own Son, but

delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought" with the price of Christ's redeeming love (I Cor. 6:19-20; *cp.* Acts 20:28). "All things that the Father hath are Mine" (John 16:15).

The life of Jesus is a beautiful illustration of the spirit of the divine Worker. He is the great Servant, the Servant of servants, who walked the streets of earth in the humble garb of a lowly peasant. "I am among you as He that serves" (Luke 22:27). "Ye call Me Master and Lord, and ye say well; for so I am." But "I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord; neither He that is sent greater than He that sent Him" (John 13:13, 16). He was the Son of the King of kings, but He lays no selfish claim to the ordinary prerogatives of royalty or the "divine right" of earthly kings. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). In Him there is no selfish assertion of ownership or absolute property rights in the things of earth on the basis of His unique relation to the Father. "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich" (II Cor. 8:9). The saying of Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35), is an illuminating commentary on the life of Christ. It is the best practical definition of Christian stewardship that we have, and seems to have been spoken in connection with that other saying of the Master, "Freely ye have received, freely give."

What these words meant to the disciples is clear from I Peter 4:10, where the apostle remarks, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." The members of the Church in Jerusalem had no difficulty in understanding the purpose and meaning of the Christian

life even in things temporal; not one of them affirmed "that ought of the things which he possessed was his own" (Acts 4:32). To point to the failure of the idea of stewardship as an economic venture in the early Church, especially after the destruction of Jerusalem, when Christianity came into contact with the pagan world, is like saying that Christianity failed because it prevented the World War. Christianity never fails, but men, who are enslaved by their own selfishness, fail to apply Christianity. Christ did not fail, because He took His life very seriously. He regarded it as a stewardship, and the result was that Christianity was established. The disciples did not fail; they were true to their trust. What they had received was the free gift of God in Jesus Christ, and they went forth as "good stewards of the manifold grace of God," making distribution of the gifts entrusted to them. Had they kept the gift and buried it in the grave, Christianity would have perished with them. Fortunately for us, they did not regard the principles of stewardship as an impractical ideal. We are grateful to them and to our common Lord for teaching us that the ideal can be made real by regarding life in all its relationships—religious, social, economic and political—as a stewardship.

Religion, then, is a stewardship. Christianity goes directly back to Christ, who gave it to the world as a gratuitous gift. And have we any right in the face of all that God in Christ has done for us to keep the gift to ourselves? Christ died for all "that they who live should not any longer live unto themselves, but unto Him, who died for them and rose again" (II Cor. 5:15). What is the dominant life-centre around which everything revolves? Do our lives gravitate toward God as the centre of our affection or do they converge in the self-centre of an ungodly existence? Are we drawn to God and to our fellowmen by the power of God's love and the dynamic of the cross,

or is the self-centre of our insignificant lives the attracting magnet? Do we live unto God or unto self? For whom are we living? That is the question. We have a right to ask this question even of people who consider themselves quite religious. For the sake of honesty it must be frankly admitted that there is such a thing as religious selfishness. Many nominal Christians are actuated by self-interest rather than by love to God and their fellowmen. The individualist in religion, who has a very inadequate conception of the social implications of the Gospel, is a case in point. He accepts the usual tenets of Christian belief, but his religion does not stir his social affections. That Jesus went down to the depths of human degradation to reclaim sinners and restore them to spiritual sonship, does not teach him to go and do likewise, but merely to accept it as an historical fact, which has no practical bearing on life as he knows it today. The disciples, on the other hand, could not escape the social implications of the glorious facts of their Christian experience. Of course they were glad for their own sake that they had met Jesus, but did they let it go at that? The social contacts established by them with prospective disciples prove beyond a doubt that they were conscious of the stewardship involved in that glad discovery.

Andrew and John, Philip, Matthew and others would never have become a factor in Christian missions, if they had taken their momentous secret out into the desert and buried it in the sand. To be sure, solitude has its place and meets a much-felt need at times. But solitude in the life of Jesus and of His disciples generally prepares for subsequent action and leads to something higher. The solitude of the desert or of the hill country must lead to fellowship with God. But the vision of the mountain-top means that fellowship with God must be succeeded by fellowship with man and by social contacts with the multitude

in the valley of despair, if religion is to be an evangelizing force. There is a communion with God in quiet meditation and a time of receptive activity and absorption of the glorious facts of the gospel. But how is the disciple to exercise his gifts and put them to their intended use, if he lacks the inward disposition to go forth in loving service, making generous distribution of the gifts which Christ has bestowed upon him? Do native gifts come to their highest fruition in the isolation of a desert isle or in a busy world of human relationships? How, then, can the recipient of the greatest of all gifts make full proof of his ministry without getting out into the world and investing God's capital where it will do the most good? Christianity without its social implications is unthinkable. To be with Jesus is a precious stewardship, including all that this means of wonderful instruction, inspiration, and the gift of preaching and healing. The terms of that stewardship imply that the disciple cannot live a life of religious isolation; he must go out into Galilæan society and turn to the advantage of the gospel whatever contacts he will be able to make with the people of his native province. The modern disciple, whether he be a preacher or a lay worker, is under a like obligation to go out among his fellows, so that he may develop and multiply his God-given talents. The man who has been with Jesus and claims to be in fellowship with Christ and His Church cannot escape his obligations to society, if he is at all conscious of his stewardship relation to God.

Every Christian ought to be conscious of that relation. Are you? If you are a Christian you cannot be ignorant of the fact that God in Christ has given you all things richly to enjoy. Your assurance of salvation lies in the gospel with all its healing powers of body, mind and soul. But have you ever realized that you are in grave danger of losing your own salvation as soon as you withhold from

others God's most precious gift? While the gospel is a gospel for individuals and has its personal side, yet the gospel without the motive and generous aims of Christian stewardship would have little to recommend it to others as "the leaven that leaveneth the whole lump" of humanity. The man who has imbibed the lofty principles of Christianity and breathes the spirit of Jesus Christ cannot help imitating the example of Jesus and of His disciples. He may not be able to preach, but this is no barrier to the faithful exercise on his part of other phases of Christian stewardship. The Christian, of all men, ought to be only too glad to creep out of the shell of a narrow and selfish individualism and apply the gospel to the healing of the nations. Though many of us may lack the power of curing bodily ailments, nevertheless we are to be helpers in a very real sense, casting out the demons of selfishness and sin, of sorrow and despair and bringing spiritual help and refreshment to aching hearts and weary souls.

Life as a whole is a stewardship, not an ownership. God is the source of all created life, "He giveth to all life." My life is not my own, both from the standpoint of creation and redemption. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price." We are His property. If God has created my life and redeemed my soul, His rights of property cannot be ignored. My life is dependent upon His will, and He has first claim upon it. Though I am in a sense a free agent (I Cor. 7:22), I cannot escape my stewardship relation. I do so at the risk of losing the only life worth living, and that is, to please God and help my neighbour. But I would not be ungrateful for unmerited blessings, for talents and powers, freely bestowed upon me by the loving hand of God. The recognition of my stewardship with all its implications, should be voluntary out of love to Him, who loved me first. This is what the disciples did. They are fully conscious of the fact that what

they have received has not been entrusted to them merely for safe keeping, but for investment, so that it may bring a large return to their Lord. The gospel, with its healing effect upon humanity, is a treasure for investment. To keep it to save one's soul is to forfeit the gift as a penalty for its disuse. Life, too, is a treasure—a very precious treasure. And you cannot keep it, unless you make the proper use of it by investing it where it will do the most good. This was the fatal mistake of the unfaithful steward, who buried his Master's talent in the dark vault of human selfishness. Every such buried treasure not only defrauds the Owner, who is God, but also the unfaithful steward himself. No gift can be kept by hiding it in the recesses of our being. It has little or no value apart from human needs, its value being determined by what it is worth to society. God loans it for use. And unless we use it in God's appointed way we lose it. Here we are with talents and powers, with life itself and all the opportunities it presents for service. What is your life? A stewardship or an ownership? Invest your life in such a way that it will yield a maximum return to Giver and recipient alike.

If you want to put your life to the very best possible use, there is no calling like that of the ministry in which talents of every description may be utilized to greater advantage than in some other vocation. In the average business enterprise men have to bury half their talents, whereas in the ministry there is not a single talent which will not find appropriate and useful exercise. Have you talents—capacities of heart, mind, and soul? Thank God for them and learn to use them, not for selfish ends, but rather in the interests of the Master's kingdom. Have you a good speaking voice? Rejoice in using it, not for selfish gain by pleading the cause of wealthy clients, but learn to speak for God by pleading with the souls of men, so that

the "day of wrath" may be a day of mercy. Have you powers of personality and the ability to lead others? If so, use them to draw men into the net of evangelic truth, and you will experience the joy of fishing for men's souls. Have you executive and administrative ability? This gift can be a means of great blessing, if the one possessing it will consecrate the talent to the Church, and eventually he will find his place in the field of religious education, or in some executive or administrative capacity, where his gifts and special aptitudes will do the greatest good. But how will you administer the entrusted talent? To gratify some selfish ambition and make money at the expense of your Lord, or will you consecrate the gift to the glory of God and the welfare of your fellowmen? Have you a bright intellect or a philosophic mind? Never was the need greater than today for men of intellectual powers to cope with the serpentine wisdom of the foes of Christianity. Have you had a college education? Thank God for the opportunity. But how do you look upon your educational advantages? As a means of getting on in the world or of helping your less fortunate brethren? Do you know that every talent, every ability, every gift which you have received is a trust from God and that you are accountable to him for the way in which you administer His goods? What you have received is not an asset which you may put down on the credit side of your personal account. It is a definite liability which you owe to your Master and to your fellowmen, because it is under these terms that you have been made a steward. You are the trustee of your Master's property. He is the Creditor and you are the debtor. What you have received gratuitously must be given freely and invested not in your personal enterprises but in the Master's business. To do that may mean the sacrifice of material prosperity, but what of it? Life—real life, the higher life—is not to be measured by earthly

success; it is the end of the present life-process that counts. To every faithful steward the Master's "Well done" will be a sufficient reward. O the joy of such a stewardship! Out of it will come a new wealth which is beyond human comprehension.

In view of what has already been said, it will be superfluous to add that we are stewards not only of spiritual blessings but also of material blessings. And yet, while there may be a disposition to accept the basis of stewardship in spiritual matters, we are less prone to recognize the principle so far as our earthly goods are concerned. But why should we claim exemption for our earthly possessions? Is it because they are more valuable and real to us than spiritual realities? Our temporal possessions are by no means exempt, since they, too, may be used for the extension of Christ's kingdom. What are you doing with the Master's temporal gifts? Are you saying to yourself, "These things are mine absolutely! This money is mine —this property is mine!" If you are, you still have to learn the lesson of Christian stewardship as it is taught in the Bible. We have seen that according to the Word of God our title to our temporal possessions is not absolute; mere possession is not ownership in the sense of absolute proprietorship. The Creator of the universe, who is the real Owner of all things, has merely given us a lease, good only for the average span of life, and then the summons will be, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward." May whatever we have received be given us to bless others, and we shall be doubly blessed.

Is the standard that we have set, too high for the average man? And is the Biblical idea of stewardship to be regarded as an unattainable ideal for the present age? The standard is not too high, if we are Christians; nor is it beyond our reach, if we take Christ seriously enough.

Did the members of the apostolic band belong to the superman class? Were they angels and higher beings of some sort, or were they men like ourselves? Who were the original Twelve? They were men! Some of them, like Peter and John, to judge from their qualities of leadership, were above the average, perhaps. But the others were of the average type who did the following. Somebody has to do the following, and it is a matter to be thankful for, that by far the greater majority of these immortals were average men. Their only claim to distinction is that, with the exception of Judas, they were all good followers of Jesus Christ, who called, trained, and commissioned them for the work of the ministry. To spread His kingdom among men, Jesus relied upon the chosen band and all His followers, to continue the work which He had begun. Those called are to be consecrated personalities in living contact with individuals. They must stamp upon individual minds and hearts the personal impress of their Master's character and message. The world is to be saved not by angels and higher beings, but by men; not by supermen, but by ordinary men—average men! God could save the world by the creative power of a divine fiat, if He chose, but redemption proceeds along ethical lines. In the sphere of redemption He prefers to work in and through us. Souls, under God, are saved by human instrumentality. God works through men. The Old Testament has its prophets and the New its apostles. Thus the prophetic method of telling forth divine things becomes the permanent vehicle of conveying evangelic truth. In the fulness of time God's supreme revelation to man is clothed in human form, and "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The Incarnation did not dispense with a human ministry. It established the apostolate and placed it on a permanent basis by forever consecrating human speech to the spiritnal needs of the race. And as a result of the teaching of

Christ and of the apostles, modern Christianity has its universal priesthood of believers—in theory at least. This, if taken seriously by every one who names the name of Christ, implies a universal obligation. The obligation to make Christ known is on all. Not a single man, woman or child is exempt from Christian service. Andrew, in bringing his brother to Jesus, is an example for universal imitation. All can imitate it. What we need is a Christ-loving heart and a tender concern for others' welfare, and then we will go out, like Andrew and John, Philip, Matthew and Peter and fish for men's souls. The world needs men—apostolic men and missionaries with the spirit of Christ in them.

Are you afraid of apostolic precedents? You say the apostles accomplished so much. True, but remember that Jesus made them what they are. They were men of humble origin and average gifts, yet their names live, because of their association with the most outstanding Personality in all history. You, too, may share His company, if you will, and be inspired to do the very thing that makes you pause and hesitate. You say you cannot preach, and well you may. But if God wants you to be a preacher, you may depend upon the enabling power of the call to the ministry. The disciples were not able to preach when Jesus called them, but He taught them how after they obeyed the call and followed Him. Perhaps this is your real difficulty. The call has come and you have not obeyed it. You say you cannot be sure that you have received it. Why not? You say you lack the necessary qualifications. Did Peter feel qualified when he exclaimed, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord"? Jesus said unto him, "Fear not; from now on thou shall take men alive." What kind of a man was Peter? He was a good fisherman; that much is to be said in his favour. Nothing more? Yes; he was healthy and strong, courageous and pious. His

education was nothing to boast of; it was of the average type, but he was open-minded and receptive to the truth. And last but not least, he had faith in Jesus Christ.

Are these qualifications different from those a man of today might be expected to possess? Are you in poor health? That might be a disqualification. However, I hear you say it is not a question of health. Is it a question, then, of education? Did you leave high school and go to work while others went to college? If this is what makes you pause, let me say that a neglected education is no insuperable obstacle in any field of endeavour. It can be overcome, if at the age of twenty-five or thirty, or even of thirty-five or forty, you are still willing to learn and apply yourself to the task in hand. Have you a willing mind and heart and a courageous faith in the Son of God? Will you launch out into the deep with Peter and the other disciples and do some exploring in the untried depths of faith? Are you anchored in Christ? If you are, you may plunge into the briny deep, pierce the unknown waves, and swim against the flow of adverse tides by the mighty strokes of a conquering faith. Trouble not yourself about future maintenance, if the Master calls to higher service. He will provide and shoals of fish will fill the net to the breaking point. Many a humble youth has gone forth from a poverty-stricken roof to be educated and trained for the ministry without enough money in his pocket to pay for the next meal, and yet somehow his temporal needs were met, either by relatives or through beneficiary aid received from the synodical board of ministerial education. And if he is a man of initiative he will frequently be able to earn his way through college and seminary. However, the Church is willing to help, if necessary, so that a poor student may give his undivided attention to his studies.

The disciples, it will be noted, were chosen not for their

natural qualifications, however important these may be in themselves; the choice proceeded along spiritual lines. The germ of faith was there, and Christ meant more to them than relatives, friends and possessions. That is why "they left all and followed Jesus." Their consecration was complete, and hence they could concentrate on the higher work and succeed in it. They did not plough, under the inspiration of the moment, in the unfertile field of pious resolves, and then look back, hoping for a more convenient season, when they might throw in their all with Christ. Had Matthew done that, and had he continued, for a while longer, to gather in the shekels, he might have been more entangled in his earthly affairs and worldly interests than ever before. But he met the supreme crisis of his life by instant obedience to the call of Jesus. Happy he, who recognizes the supreme and critical hour of his career when it comes, and meets it like a man. Not all Christians are called to the highest office nor is every one expected to enter the ministry, but all are called to some service. This does not mean that all Christian people should abandon their secular occupations, but when such a call comes, there is no excuse for parrying it. The call in that case is "Now." It may come again and again in the silent watches of the night, but if we neutralize and stifle the admonitions of an awakened conscience and kill the inner urge by plunging ourselves into business more zealously than ever before, the opportunity of a lifetime will be gone forever, and our lives will be like so many ciphers of flesh and blood in the scales of eternity. Do not temporize with the call of Christ, because you have made other plans for this life of yours. It is not for the steward to interfere with his Master's plans. To a man of temporizing spirit, who finds it hard to detach himself from interests lying nearest to his heart, Jesus says, "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of

God." The man pleads priority for a filial duty which he owes to his father, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." According to Luke, Christ's ministry in Peræa was rapidly drawing to a close, and not much time would be left for the instruction of prospective disciples. Jesus therefore reminds the young man that discipleship in his case would have to mean immediate training for service. The King's business demands haste and takes precedence over the lesser duties of life, whether public or private. Those that are spiritually dead would be able to attend to the usual formalities of a protracted oriental funeral. Spiritual duties come first and he must follow Christ now or never.

The one called must obey the call; this is the first lesson of discipleship. Reverence for parents dare not take precedence over the higher duty of serving God. If it does, it becomes idolatry, in which the preference is given to gods that we have set up in our own divided hearts. Oh, how much is missed in life through indecision and feebleness of resolve! How we cling to relatives and friends, to nets and boats, to shekels and business prospects and to our temporal possessions, when Christ is summoning us to higher service! How much happiness is forfeited through delay. There is no excuse for delay when Jesus calls. Procrastinating habits do not make good disciples. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." A certain candidate for discipleship presented himself to Jesus, one day, saying, "Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go bid them farewell that are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:61-62). The man who swerves in his allegiance to the kingdom is like a would-be ploughman, trying to plough a field and looking backward at one and the same time. We cannot go for-

ward and backward simultaneously. To go forward in the Christian life is one thing; to look back with secret longing on the old haunts that we have left behind, is another. It is either a case of going forward or backward. Whom will ye follow, God or Mammon? Anyone who tries to do both is unworthy of the privileges of Christian discipleship.

Do the would-be disciples we have mentioned belong to a by-gone age? We have reason to think that there is something quite modern about them. We have seen more than one such life go practically the same road. Are they not typical of many would-be ministerial candidates, both in and out of college, who are halting between two opinions and drifting, as a consequence, in the current of their own earthly desires? When the Master calls to them and says, "Hither, after Me," as the words literally mean, the answer is, "Suffer me first to go and work off the debt which I have contracted during my college days." But the divine Creditor replies, "Does the debt which you owe to father, mother, brother, sister, friend or business acquaintance take precedence over the infinitely greater debt which you owe to God? Have I not been making vast loans to you all your life and even before you were born? Whatever course you take to meet the demands of Roman law, remember there is a higher law which you cannot ignore with impunity. It is necessary to pay one's debts, and labour for the supply of physical wants, but there are other and higher responsibilities resting upon us. The debts we owe to one another are mere trifles in comparison to the debt we owe to God. The things of the kingdom come first. The emphasis on secondary things betrays a loss of the sense of stewardship. A faithful steward will not enter business on his own account. To do so is to misappropriate borrowed funds. The steward must devote himself to the Master's business.

It is a common fallacy to suppose that if a man has a talent for business he ought in all cases to choose a business career. Many a high grade youth, attending high school conferences on life service, is advised by so-called vocational experts to choose business or law or medicine, if his aptitudes and inclinations run in that direction, and never a word is said, either by the boy or his adviser, about the claims of the Christian ministry. Unfortunately, many Christian people share the same erroneous view, and the consequence is that some of the best ministerial timber is lost to the Church. What would have happened to Peter and John and Matthew and a host of others, if they had attended a modern vocational conference? The Galilæan fishermen, and especially the sons of Zebedee, would very likely have been told to continue in business and employ more hired servants. Matthew would probably have been told to stay in politics and keep on the right side of Cæsar and of Herod Antipas. And what psychologist would have failed to recognize that Paul with his marvellous powers of concentration and native gifts would have made a good business man? What a colossal loss the Græco-Roman world would have sustained, if the disciples had remained in business, or if Paul had been side-tracked by ambitious parents or worldly-wise advisers!

From a human standpoint the advice ordinarily given to young men by vocational experts is excellent as far as it goes, but it fails to take into account the factor of religion. Is there nothing to be said in favour of the enabling power of the call of Christ? Does a capacity for business incapacitate a man for the office of the ministry? Of our most successful home and foreign missionaries, some are men of undoubted business ability. Perhaps that is why they are all the more successful as fishers of men; they at least have the advantage of being able to handle people. Peter was an excellent fisherman, as were also the sons of Zebe-

dee. Was that a disqualification? Did Jesus think so, or did it disqualify him for the higher art of fishing for men's souls? Certainly not. Jesus could see deeper than our modern psychologists and vocational experts; He recognizes the transforming power of faith even in its faintest beginnings, and hence He spiritualizes and immortalizes the fishing industry by using it as an emblem and a type of that other service to which these men are called. Are you in the fishing business, my friend? Jesus comes to you and says, "I will teach you the higher art of taking men alive!" Are you a tax-gatherer in the employ of Cæsar or some other master, who doles out to you his shekels? He says, "I will make you a steward of the King of kings and pay you in the pure gold of the kingdom." Are you a carpenter and builder, like the Nazarene? The Man of Galilee comes to you and says, "I have living stones for you to build with, and I will make you a builder of living temples and heavenly mansions." Are you a weaver or tent-maker, like the apostle Paul? Jesus says, "Leave the loom ere the shuttle breaks the thread of life, and weave the loose ends of life into garments of righteousness for the heavenly tabernacle." Are you a ploughman? He says, "Learn to plough straight furrows in the fields of the kingdom and plenteous will be the harvest. Look unto Me; never mind the relatives and friends you have left behind. Do not sell your divine birthright for a pottage of lentils, never mind the flesh-pots of Egypt or the Babylonian garment, which is not for you to wear. I have better things in store for you. And if I am appealing to your better self, come and follow Me, and I will make your life pre-eminently worth while. If I have rescued and saved you from the stagnant pools of your selfish endeavours, thank God for it and seek that you may be the means of saving others. Bear in mind that the work to which I am summoning you is not easy. Nothing in life

is easy that is really worth while. Are you willing to forsake all and follow Me? There is sure to be something in the way of obeying the call to discipleship. You have your earthly attachments, and you will, like the fishermen on the lake and the man in the toll-booth, have something to give up in following Me. Complete consecration will be needed, if you wish to enjoy the privileges of discipleship. Be prepared for this, and do not let some selfish interest chain you down to the lower self-centre, when you may climb to the lofty heights of Christian service."

But great is the power of covetousness. It is for this reason that men are unwilling to surrender everything that might hinder full service—everything that cannot be carried over and used in Christ's kingdom. This accounts for the fact that the industrial classes are not furnishing their proportionate share of ministerial candidates. In the time of Jesus the ministry was recruited almost entirely from the industrial class. Today, rural centres are furnishing a great many more men than our industrial centres. As Christ once summoned fishermen and toll-gatherers and weavers to leave their occupation to become fishers of men, so now He calls others, urging them to leave the ship, the desk, the spinning-mill, and the factory, to do His will in preaching the gospel. Why do so few respond? Because men are so absorbed in business of one kind or another that religion scarcely gets more than the left-overs of our time and our thought. Men find it hard to put God first, and business is developed at the expense of religion. To many, God is not even a close second. The modern business world blunts the edge of religion and makes dull our religious sensibilities. There is so much activity, but not of the right sort. There is neither consecration nor concentration in matters of religion. If the pressing problems of today are to be solved, religion must become an actuality in the complex life of today. It must

be a real power, a dynamic force, the one great motive which dominates and controls our lives. Then we shall be in a position to understand the apostle to the Gentiles, when he says, "This one thing I do," and be able to follow him in his glorious devotion to the cause of Christ.

The things of the kingdom ought to be our first concern. Let us concentrate upon them with our whole heart. Merely playing around the periphery of religion is like so much beating of the air. Sham battles are not a sign of aggressive discipleship. Who but a would-be disciple, or a renegade, will refuse to follow the Master when the command is, "Hither! after Me!"? To follow Christ and to catch the inspiration of His marvellous personality is an experience that puts real joy into a man's religion. Such an experiment is worth trying. It is worth vastly more than it costs. Try it and experience the thrill of real discipleship.

## XIII

## THE CALL OF THE APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES

Acts 9; 22; 26; Galatians 1:16; I Corinthians 9:1; 15:8

SAUL OF TARSUS is the real primate among the apostles of the first century. He is without doubt the foremost representative of Jesus Christ; next to Jesus Himself he is the ablest interpreter of the Christian religion, its most illustrious missionary, preacher, teacher, scholar and martyr. He has had a most remarkable influence on the history of the apostolic age, and through St. Augustine and Luther he has set his mark upon mediæval and modern Christianity.

A careful study of the ever-increasing literature on the life and labours of the great missionary apostle reveals a twofold tendency. On the one hand, some writers seem to have a strong aversion for anything that savours of the supernatural in religion. They are prejudiced, in the name of science so-called, against anything that is outside and above the ordinary and the natural. Consequently one need not be surprised to find that wherever this prejudice prevails the attempt is made to explain Paul as the product of his environment. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that one frequently meets with just as one-sided a treatment in the opposite direction in some of the works on the life and letters of St. Paul. Writers of this class unduly minimize, or pass by altogether, the influences of heredity or environment as if religious phenomena could

be best explained without regard to the political, social and religious background in which the man under consideration finds himself. Although time will not permit a thorough discussion of this broader aspect of the subject, some attention must be given to the life of St. Paul on its human side for the sake of a more comprehensive view of the man before his conversion. If there is a human and a divine side in the life of the God-man Himself, one can postulate no less in the life of His servant. The complex personality of the man and his remarkable contributions to Christianity are the result of his extraordinary endowments and native gifts, of his environment, and last but not least, of his wonderful Christian experience. His very birth with its religious heritage and political rights, his cosmopolitan atmosphere, his fanatical zeal for the religion of his fathers, his contacts with the despised followers of the Nazarene, and his persecuting activity—all these are of some value to the apostle and his work, even if they do not explain his conversion to Christianity.

Saul of Tarsus was a many-sided man. Whereas the other apostles were Aramaic Jews hailing for the most part from the hamlets and villages along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, Paul touched the outside world at many points. He was born in the city of Tarsus, the capital of the province of Cilicia, in Asia Minor. The geographical position of the city made it a centre of commercial enterprise and political power. Located midway between the East and the West, it was the meeting-place more especially of Greeks, Romans and Jews. Through the conquests of Alexander the Great and the spread of Greek culture the oriental aspect of the town was changed to a cosmopolitan centre, exactly reproducing the mixed civilization of the age. Tarsus was a typical Hellenistic city, and although many languages were spoken by a mixed population, Greek was the official language here, as else-

where in the Græco-Roman world from the time of Alexander the Great and his successors down to the Cæsars. Under the influence of Greek culture a great university was established, outranking in some respects that of Athens and Alexandria. Paul was a citizen of no mean city, which certainly made some contribution to his intellectual, social and political life. There is no evidence to show that he attended the university, which was a seat of Stoic philosophy. No Hellenistic Jew of the Pharisaic order would permit his own son to matriculate in a Gentile school. While Gentile influences entered into the formative period of his life, Greek ideas and Greek culture do not explain his Damascus experience. Christianity is not a philosophy but an experience of spiritual realities. His conception of the Christian religion is independent of Hellenism. Nor does the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Tarsus and the broad outlook of Roman imperialism explain the universalism of Paul's message to the Gentile world. In our humble opinion he was more powerfully affected and influenced in this respect by the universalism of the prophets, such as Isaiah 40-66 and certain passages in the Psalms, than by the universalism of Hellenic culture or the political ideals of Rome. If world-wide political unity could have given birth to a world-wide religion, Hellenic "Zeus" (the Latin "Jupiter") or the Roman emperor worship of a later period would have reduced Christianity to a Jewish sect or perhaps crushed it altogether for its refusal to burn incense to the glory of the Roman empire. All that the Græco-Roman civilization did for Christianity was to prepare the way for the coming of a world-wide religion.

As a citizen of a self-governing Roman metropolis, Saul of Tarsus was a citizen of the Roman world. He was born a Roman citizen, the right of citizenship having been conferred either upon his father or one of his ancestors.

What that right involved is not certain, but to judge from the use made of it by the apostle it carried with it protection against the injustice of local magistrates and the caprice of municipal law.

But a free-born Roman citizen would also have a Roman name. In fact, it was usual for both Palestinian and foreign Jews to have two names. Such compounds often had a similar sound as, for instance, in Acts 13:9, where mention is made of "Saul who was also called Paul." Attention is called to the ludicrous meaning of the name Saul or Saulos in Greek, and hence the substitution of Paul for Saul in Hellenistic circles. According to others, the name by which the apostle was known to his Gentile converts was derived from the Latin paulus, in the sense of "little of stature," or "least among the apostles."

The question as to whether Paul, the Roman citizen, acquired some knowledge of Latin during his boyhood days in Tarsus must be answered in the negative. Greek and not Latin was the language of daily intercourse among the people of Tarsus. There can be no doubt that he could speak Greek in his boyhood days. We no longer think of the Greek in the Pauline Epistles as a Jewish-Greek jargon. According to the most recent scholarship, the apostle uses the language in such masterly fashion that he must have become familiar with it in very early life.

Birth in a distinguished university town and Roman citizenship bring Paul into early connection with the world at large. But the Græco-Roman or Hellenistic influences of his early surroundings are only a part of his equipment. It is well to remember that he was not only born in Greek-speaking Tarsus, but also in an orthodox Jewish home, where the Aramaic language of the homeland was not a dead language as yet. The son of strict Jewish parents, who kept up their connections with the land of the fathers,

used both Aramaic and Greek in childhood. Aramaic was his mother-tongue and the rudiments of the language had already been acquired by the time he became a pupil of Gamaliel.

Saul of Tarsus, then, was born in a bilingual home, where piety was hereditary. It was located, not in the Gentile quarters of the city, but in the Jewish colony constituting, as it were, a city within a city, separate and distinct in many ways from the world without. To be sure, the colony was looked upon as part of the city, whose members, in Tarsus at least, were on a par politically with the Gentile population. While the Hebrews in Tarsus felt in no small degree the influence of the larger world in which they lived, it was comparatively easy for them to preserve the Hebrew side of their life along with the ordinary duties of citizenship. They had settled here possibly for business reasons or else to escape persecution at the hands of over-zealous conquerors who wanted to hasten the Hellenizing process, substituting the Greek language and Greek culture for Aramaic and the religion of Judaism. But along with their zeal for business, they assembled for worship on the Sabbath in the synagogue, which was the centre of the religious life in the community. The Jewish synagogue, which as an institution dates back to the Babylonian exile, was an effective protest against the debasing image-worship of pagan polytheism. Its services were very simple and included prayer, the reading of the law and the prophets, the translation of the Hebrew Scripture lesson into the colloquial Greek or the current Aramaic, some running comments or hortatory remarks (sermon) and the benediction. The pious Jew, though outwardly a Hellenist, continued to serve the God of his fathers in the land of his adoption. Gentile citizenship might be his, but for all that he felt like an alien in a strange land. He retained the warmest affection for Zion

and its temple and kept in close touch with the mother-community at Jerusalem.

Saul's father belonged to the Judaism of the Dispersion. This dispersion had begun with the Assyrian conquests and had been furthered by Greek rulers, notably by the Ptolemies of Egypt and later by the Romans. The remarkable thing about many of these scattered Jewish communities is that they managed to preserve their identity, thanks to their clannishness and the tenacity of their religious beliefs. The day of the Assyro-Babylonian had passed, as had that of the Persian and of the Greek, who put his cultural impress upon other peoples to a degree shared by no other nationality. The prevailing culture of the world was Greek, and though the day of the Roman with his genius for government would pass, too, the Jew, with his veneer of Hellenic culture, generally remained a Jew at heart. He belonged to a peculiar people, conscious of the world mission of the religion of the Hebrews. In cities like Tarsus the protecting isolation of the Jewish colony enabled these settlers to keep intact the essential elements of their rich religious heritage. This meant much to men like the father of young Saul. The former was a Pharisee, as was also his father before him.

There can be no doubt but that Paul's home in Tarsus was thoroughly Jewish. It was presided over by a man who was much attached to Pharisaic traditions and observances. As an adherent of the strictest theological party among the Jews, he would follow the time-honoured custom of praying and walking with broad phylacteries. Undoubtedly he was most scrupulous and exact in the exercise of religion, whether in the home or the synagogue. No mention is made of his wife, but everything seems to indicate that she was a woman of piety and character, possessing those finer qualities which enter into the warp and woof of a real pious home. She must have been a

remarkable mother to give birth to such a son and have a part in his early education. His Hebrew name reflects the religious tone of his early surroundings. The new-born child is regarded as an answer to prayer. Saul is the "asked-for," the "desired" of the Lord. In accordance with Jewish custom, he received this name when he was circumcised on the eighth day. The name, though strongly reminiscent of the hero of the tribe of Benjamin, was a proof not so much of loyalty to the tribe of Benjamin, to which the father belonged, as of loyalty to the religious heritage of the past, jointly preserved by Judah and Benjamin. Though born in Tarsus, he is nevertheless an Israelite and a Hebrew. He is a Jew both in nationality and education. Pharisaic parentage in his case implies that the home training in Tarsus would be of a religious character. In place of the modern cradle song, he heard from his mother's lips the stories of the Old Testament. The heroes of his young imagination were not Hercules ("Jack the Giant Killer") and Cæsar Augustus, but Abraham and Joseph, the giant figure of Moses, the prowess of Samson, the military exploits of Saul and David, and we rather suspect that his little ears would take in with special interest the historical narrative of his own namesake, who was the first king of Israel. He learned by heart, at a tender age, many passages of Scripture. Among these were Psalms of praise and adoration (Psalms 113-118) and passages like Deuteronomy 6:4-9. At the age of six, or thereabouts, he would go to his "vineyard," as the rabbis called the Jewish synagogue school. Doubtless there could be found in Tarsus one or more such schools. The medium of instruction was Greek, and the Greek version of the Old Testament was used. But as the average rabbi could read the ancient Hebrew, the pupil also learned to read many parts of the Hebrew Scriptures in the original. Some time before the age of thirteen,

when by a sort of "confirmation" the scholar became a "son of the commandment," a beginning was made to acquaint this prospective "son of the law" with some of the sayings of famous Jewish rabbis and their interpretations of Scripture.

But the education of the growing boy was not deemed complete without a trade of some kind. According to the Talmud, a threefold duty devolved upon the head of every household, "It is incumbent upon the father to circumcise his son, to teach him the law and to teach him some occupation." As it was the duty of every father to teach his son a trade, young Saul learned how to make tents. These were made either out of the hair or the skins of the Angora goats, which browsed over the hills of Cilicia and other parts of Asia Minor. Whether Saul became a weaver or a tanner, or both, is not entirely clear.

His occupation, whatever it was, renders it improbable that he left Cilicia for Jerusalem before the age of twelve or fifteen. In Acts 22:3 the words, "I was brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel," simply indicate that he went to Jerusalem at an early age. Probably this was his first visit to the Holy City, now that he had attained the legal age. He had a sister living there. This may have facilitated his going to "college." Perhaps he stayed at the home of this married sister during his student days in Jerusalem (Acts 23:16). The early home training in Tarsus and the local synagogue teaching were now to be supplemented by a more thoroughgoing and systematic course of theological instruction in the highly esteemed rabbinical college of Gamaliel. Young Saul wanted to become a rabbi, that is, a minister, a teacher, and a lawyer all in one. And he had come to the right place, for the grandson of Hillel was the most renowned rabbi of the age.

Saul entered upon his studies in rabbinical theology,

attaining great proficiency in his knowledge of the Scriptures and the traditions of the fathers. While the curriculum also included a number of secular subjects, the principal themes of study were the Mosaic law and the voluminous commentaries of the scribes. Instruction in the classroom was mostly oral. A passage from the Hebrew Bible would be taken as a text and as the classical Hebrew had long since passed out of common use, the passage was translated into Aramaic, a kindred dialect spoken by the Jews of Palestine and by nearly all Jews in addition to the Greek. Various interpretations were given. Many of these were very fanciful indeed, as they were based for the most part on the allegorical method. Much weight was attached to ancient authorities, chiefly scribes and Pharisees, whose comments were quoted and discussed. Stories, anecdotes, riddles and parables were all woven into the themes under consideration. In the free-for-all discussion, which was a part of the regular classroom work, scholars were allowed to ask questions as well as the teacher. Frequently the latter would base his teaching on the replies given. This question-and-answer method was used to good effect in sharpening the wits of the students. Questions were put and then debated by the disputants in the form of dialogue. This form of mental gymnastics did much for students, like Paul, to develop the art of disputation and the power of ready speech. With his alert mind, how he must have enjoyed these discussions in the classroom of Gamaliel, the master teacher!

Centuries before this a class of men, known as the scribes, and having no priestly connections whatsoever, had devoted themselves to the study and interpretation of the written law as found in the Pentateuch and the traditions or unwritten laws, called the Halacha. An attempt was made, on the basis of these two sources, to regulate and define in every particular the lives of individuals and

the services of the temple. Naturally, rules and regulations of all sorts multiplied without number to meet changing conditions. It was the business of the scribes to search the Scriptures and oral traditions for hooks upon which to hang an endless chain of precepts and rules, covering every possible emergency. Emendations to existing rules and practices were first submitted for approval to the Sanhedrin or Jewish senate, this being the chief legislative body for all Jews everywhere.

Those who were specially interested in legalistic interpretations of Scripture gathered in schools conducted by eminent rabbis. In Paul's time two rival schools were to be found in Jerusalem. One of these had been founded by Hillel and the other by Shammai. In the school of Hillel, now presided over by the celebrated Gamaliel, the accumulated traditions of the past were put on a plane with Scripture itself, while in the school of Shammai the authority of tradition was rejected and only the Mosaic law was recognized as authentic and binding. The followers of Shammai were the enlightened "naturalists" of their day who denied the doctrine of the resurrection. This reminds us of the Sadducees in the Gospels, who as a matter of fact attended the school of Shammai, whereas the school of Hillel was patronized by the Pharisees, a name which signifies the Separated. The prevailing tendency of Pharisaism was to separate the religion of Judaism from outside influences by erecting a wall of legalism around it. The rock upon which the national life was to be built was a life of legal righteousness. This was the ideal of Gamaliel's school and formed an indispensable part of the curriculum. Some writers on the life of Paul grow unduly enthusiastic about the broadmindedness and tolerant spirit of Gamaliel as if this quality of mind had much to do with the universalism of Paul's gospel. It is true that he stood up in the council and protested against

the violence of the Sadducees towards the apostles (Acts 5:34). But there is reason to think that Gamaliel's protest on this occasion was prompted not so much by his breadth of view as by political considerations. It will be remembered that the doctrine of the resurrection which the apostles had been preaching was exceedingly obnoxious to the Sadducees (Acts 4:2; compare 23:6-10) and not at all antagonistic to Pharisaic teaching. As Gamaliel was a member of the Pharisaic party, this was no quarrel of his. A Pharisee, moreover, would in the very nature of the case look with disfavour upon any measure sponsored by a Sadducee. And finally nothing is said anywhere that Gamaliel at a later day raised a restraining hand to save Stephen, who had attacked with great boldness the Pharisees themselves. The extravagant idea some men have of Gamaliel's broad sympathies cannot be substantiated.

Gamaliel was at heart a Pharisee, who believed that the scrupulous observance of every detail of the Jewish law was the only way to be saved. His teaching was that of the most rigid of all the Jewish sects and bore its natural fruit in the persecuting career of his most distinguished pupil, who followed the Pharisaic conception of religion to its logical conclusion. Religion was a law to be observed in outward life. Its infraction would be sure to arouse the antagonism of a man trained and steeped in the legalism of the Pharisees. Merely to hint at the possibility that the Mosaic law might be superseded some day by a more spiritual conception of religion would be nothing short of sacrilege. A consistent Pharisee is bound to look upon the followers of the crucified Nazarene, who had attacked the Pharisaic ideal of the Messiah, as traitors to the religion of Judaism. If Jesus of Nazareth had been Israel's Messiah, so he argued, He could not have died the cursed death of the cross. The Messiah is destined to live and reign.

Therefore the Messiahship of Jesus is disproved by His death and burial. To teach otherwise is to make mockery of the Jewish religion. The missionary zeal of these Nazarenes must be stopped immediately, if Judaism is to survive. Before very long Judaism, with its world-mission, will be reduced to an insignificant sect, unless something is done to prevent it. This emergency calls for drastic action. To Saul's way of thinking, persecution under such circumstances is a supreme duty. The fierce persecuting zeal of the young jurist trained in the legalism of Gamaliel's school of theology is the natural outcome of his watchful enthusiasm and zeal for the law.

How long Saul continued his studies under Gamaliel is not known. He may have left Jerusalem after completing his rabbinical education in order to undertake some practical work in one of the many synagogues of the Dispersion. He seems to have been absent from Jerusalem during the public ministry of Jesus. The passage in II Corinthians 5:16 is thought by some to indicate that Paul had seen Jesus in the days of His flesh. But a proper translation of the verse renders this more than unlikely. The apostle is contrasting the Jewish idea of a political Messiah of the fleshly type with the spiritual conception of the Christian. He says, "Though (as Jews) we have known a Messiah of the fleshly type, yet now (as Christians) we know such a Messiah no more." The Christian Messiah is no nationalistic Christ. He is the fulfiller of the world-mission of Israel.

The young Cilician either returned to Jerusalem after the death of Jesus or else began his studies under Gamaliel about that time. Our information concerning Saul's residence in Jerusalem is very meagre. We meet the brilliant young rabbi in Acts 7:58, keeping guard over the garments of those who took the lead in the stoning of Stephen. "And Saul was consenting unto his death" (Acts 8:1).

What Pharisee could endure the stinging rebuke of a speech like that of Stephen in the council chamber! Who could fail to see the trend of it? It really amounted to a declaration of war on existing institutions! Saul was among the very first to accept the challenge. He was dead in earnest about it. With him religion was a matter of life and death. He saw that Christianity meant to supplant Judaism. This aggressive spokesman of the seditious sect must die! And now that he is dead, loyalty to Jewish institutions demands that all those sympathizing with Stephen must perish also. The fires of religious hatred had been kindled in the breast of every loyal son of the law. Judaism was fighting for its very existence.

To the young Pharisee, who saw what was at stake, there was no worthier task to which he might devote his life than that of persecuting the Christians. From the martyrdom of Stephen onward, Saul became the active agent of a well-planned and organized system of persecution. He threw himself wholeheartedly and most religiously into the bloody work, raging like a wolf in the Christian fold and scattering believers far and wide. His persecuting zeal was rewarded in all probability with a seat in the ruling council of the Jews, where we find him soon afterwards, probably at the age of thirty, giving his vote against the Christians. "There was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem. . . . As for Saul, he made havoc of the Church, entering the houses and haling men and women committed them to prison. . . . And when they were put to death, I gave my vote against them" (Acts 8:1, 3; 26:10). Saul is the acknowledged leader and champion of aggressive Pharisaism, waging what he believes to be a righteous war against the Nazarenes. From his point of view the Christians have blasphemed the name of the God of Israel in speaking lightly of the Mosaic law and the temple with its

ceremonial worship. Outwardly they worship Jehovah and observe the law, but is it right to regard them as worshippers of the one true God, when they also worship the Man of Nazareth at their weekly gatherings?

The young zealot by his contact with the Pharisees, whose piety had been so daringly challenged and condemned by the Prophet of Nazareth, certainly must have known that Jesus had been a man of about his own age, who instead of sitting at the feet of the wise in recognized schools of learning was only a village mechanic with no educational advantages like his own. Was it not the consensus of opinion among men of ability and authority that this self-styled teacher went up and down the land making preposterous claims? That such a one should be esteemed the Messiah of the Jews and worshipped as if He were divine, is rank idolatry. This raised a storm of indignation in the heart of the studious young man. His studies in the Pentateuch gave a certain Scriptural warrant for the hostile attitude which was fast approaching a state of frenzy. Passages like Deuteronomy thirteen seemed to fit the present case. Here the obligation is laid on all pious Jews to pursue, even to the remotest cities, any or all Israelites who entice others to serve other gods. To persecute these renegades from the faith is a meritorious act of service to God. Saul will be chief of persecutors; he will kill the Christians and save Judaism. "Beyond measure" did he persecute the Church of God (Gal. 1:13). The young zealot "was exceedingly mad against them" (Acts 26:11). He is no ordinary man. When he loves, he loves intensely, but he is also capable of hating to the uttermost. What he believes, he believes with all his heart, and when he decides upon a course of action it must be carried through with all the vigour of an intensive soul bent on doing just one thing and doing it well. He cannot content himself with half-measures. His recent successes

in the Judæan capital are only the beginning of a relentless war on the Nazarene heretics, whom he hates with a perfect hatred. He is not the man to limit the work of persecution to Jerusalem and Judæa. Whatever he does must be done thoroughly. Not satisfied with the results already achieved, he pursues the objects of his hatred to their distant hiding-places. He "persecuted them even unto foreign cities" (Acts 26:11). This was rendered possible by the authority exercised by the Sanhedrin in matters of religion over the scattered Jews in foreign countries. Leaving to others the less hazardous work of persecution in Judæa, Samaria and Galilee (Acts 9:31), Saul turned his attention to Damascus.

To reach his present objective would require a week's journey from Jerusalem by the usual caravan route, though the actual distance between the two cities was only a hundred and thirty-three miles as the crow flies. Like a snorting war-horse, eager to pursue the foe, Saul "breathed threatening and slaughter" against the followers of Jesus whom he regarded as a false Messiah (9:1). Having secured the necessary credentials from the Sanhedrin, empowering him to persecute and arrest the scattered disciples, he and an armed company of temple-guards set out for Damascus in the hope of taking as prisoners to Jerusalem any Christians he might find in the large Jewish colony of the Syrian capital with its powerful synagogues. But instead of leading back his captives to Jerusalem, the devouring wolf was suddenly taken captive near the gates of Damascus and converted into a lamb by the Shepherd of the persecuted flock. How was this brought about? What had happened on the way? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?" Can a persecuting Pharisee become a believing Christian? Not on natural grounds. Only a miracle of grace can account for the fact that the most learned of the apostles was a con-

verted Pharisee. There is an unexplained something in every genuine conversion, which defies historical analysis.

One might spend considerable time in tracing the probable course of Saul's journey, beginning at Jerusalem and proceeding northward along the Roman road running through Shechem and Bethshean, and then crossing the Jordan near the southern end of the Sea of Galilee, and thence by gradual stages to the bare, undulating plain of a high plateau leading to Damascus, the queen of the desert. We might also go to some length in delineating the surpassing beauty of the landscape which bursts upon the eye of the weary traveller as he approaches from the south the oasis of Damascus, blossoming like a rose under the transforming influence of the waters of Abana and of Pharpar. But the outward features and circumstances of the persecutor's journey, however interesting they may be in themselves, do not explain how the apostle of the Jews became an apostle of Jesus Christ. The narrative of the conversion, as related in Acts 9, 22, and 26, makes no mention of external details such as these: apparently they have little or nothing to do with the Damascus experience. There is not the slightest indication in any of the three accounts that the physical background of the scene we are contemplating had any contribution to make to the turning-point in Paul's career, so vividly described by him, in his speech before King Agrippa. The story of his conversion, though familiar to many of us from our youth, is worth repeating, as it is our best evidence of what really occurred on the way to Damascus. We shall quote in a moment the graphic account of the event as recorded in Acts 26: 12-23. This famous oration was delivered at the court of Festus shortly after the arrival of the Jewish king, who had come to Cæsarea to pay his respects to the new imperial procurator. Taking advantage of Agrippa's visit to secure an opinion on a matter which gave him no small concern,

Festus sent for the man who had appealed his case to Cæsar. Attended by two soldiers, Paul the prisoner enters the judgment-hall and receives permission to testify in his own behalf, so that the procurator might know the facts of the case before writing to Nero.

After a few preliminary remarks the prisoner calls attention to his early career in order to lead up to the great turning-point in his life, incidentally making plain to his audience that his imprisonment is due solely to the national prejudices of the Jews against the preaching of a gospel which is not distinctively Jewish in its aims and methods. He then proceeds to give an account of his conversion while on a mission of persecution to Damascus. In this connection he makes the solemn declaration, saying, "Whereupon as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? It is hard (or "will be hard") for thee to kick against goads. And I said, Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise and stand upon thy feet, for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things which thou hast seen, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee out [of the hands] of the [Jewish] people and of the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that thou mayest turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them that have been sanctified by faith in Me. Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision; but announced first to them in Da-

mascus and then at Jerusalem and throughout all the coasts of Judæa and to the Gentiles that they should repent and turn to God, doing works befitting their repentance. For this cause some Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. Having therefore obtained the help that cometh from God I stand unto this day, testifying to both small and great, saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses did say should come to pass; (and thereby answer such questions as) whether the Christ was subject to suffering (and) whether He as (the) first by a resurrection from the dead should proclaim light both to the (Jewish) people and to the Gentiles."

The chief event in the life of Paul is his conversion. It is the main root of his whole Christian experience—the great pivotal fact upon which everything turns. It forms the chief date of his life, and marks an important epoch in the religious history of mankind. The Church, recognizing the epoch-making character of the event, has been celebrating for centuries this spiritual birthday of the apostle, assigning the twenty-fifth of January for its observance. In the selection of the days for other saints and martyrs the practice prevailed of celebrating the day of martyrdom, when they entered on their real life. But in the case of the apostle it was the incident of the conversion rather than his martyrdom when his true life began in a very real sense. The exact date of this "birthday" is unknown. That there should be a wide latitude of opinion on the subject is only natural in view of the meagre data at our disposal. Many scholars, like Harnack, McGiffert, Moffatt, Keim and Renan, place the date of Saul's conversion within a year or two of the death of Jesus; others argue for a later date. All that we are tolerably certain about is that Paul's conversion occurred shortly after the martyrdom of Stephen, while the former was on a persecuting mission to Damascus. However, there will be

general agreement in placing the Damascus experience somewhere in the first decade after the crucifixion. Obviously this would make Paul anywhere from one to ten years younger than Jesus.

The exact spot where Paul was converted is also a matter of debate. Some place the scene half a mile or so from the south gate on the road to Jerusalem, while others locate it ten miles away at the village of Kaukab, where the traveller from the south obtains his first view of Damascus. But why should we be more anxious to determine the site of the conversion than was Paul, when he faced his distinguished audience at Cæsarea? After a few introductory remarks, skilfully chosen for the occasion, he goes straight to the heart of the matter by explaining that it was when he drew near to Damascus that he saw the light of a new and glorious day, breaking down the walls of Jewish exclusiveness and throwing wide open to the nations of the earth the gates of the eternal kingdom, for the world's Messiah had arrived on the scene. He does emphasize, before proceeding with his account of the conversion, the persecution which preceded it in order to suggest to the minds of his hearers the obvious fact that to change the course of such a determined persecutor required a very real and adequate cause. It soon becomes apparent to those listening to the thrilling narrative that what the apostle is describing must have been a most extraordinary occurrence, the irony of the embarrassed Jewish king and the ridicule of Festus notwithstanding; indeed, the latter's exclamation of surprise proves that Paul was by no means describing a natural event. Since the apostle spoke in Greek, the imperial procurator did not need to be well versed in Jewish customs and questions of religion to catch the idea that Paul was speaking not of a natural but of a supernatural light presenting to his startled gaze the resurrected, glorified body of the reputed King of the Jews

whom the Romans had crucified. A heavenly vision! That was startling enough, but a resurrection from the dead! The man must be insane to speak of such things. No, Paul is not beside himself, but simply trying to give a truthful account of what actually took place near Damascus. He is merely giving utterance to "words of truth and soberness," when he says that the light which he saw was no ordinary light. Its brilliance exceeded anything he had ever seen. And so the best that he can do is to compare it to the full-orbed sun of a cloudless day. It was so luminous and bright that it could be seen above the brightness of the sun at high noon. This light was strong enough to be recognized even in the bright sunlight. Paul says that it was a light from heaven, brighter than the noonday sun. This implies that the sky was clear at the time and that the light referred to was not a flash of lightning produced by an electric storm. A bolt from the clear at midday flashing through the translucent atmosphere of an eastern sky, or even a lightning flash on a cloudy day at high noon could hardly be said to exceed the brightness of a scorching, merciless, oriental sun.

To Paul's audience the comparison of the light with the brilliance of the sun could mean but one thing, and that is, that he had in mind the supernatural character of the light. As the narrative proceeds it develops that it is a divine light reflecting the glory of the risen and exalted Christ. Stunned and blinded by the dazzling light, Paul fell prostrate before this irresistible manifestation of the divine glory. What its effect was upon his companions we do not know beyond the fact that they, too, saw the light and fell to the ground, unable for a while to speak or move. "They remained speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no man" (9:7). The vision was not for them any more than the message which accompanied it. Consequently we are prepared to find that although they saw the light and

heard the sound, they neither saw the radiant figure of a man, nor could they comprehend the meaning of the words that were spoken. The voice of the heavenly Speaker (9:4-6; 22:7-10; 26:14-18) was to them but an inarticulate sound. The statement that they "saw no man" implies that the prostrate persecutor did see some one. That the celestial light was not a mere radiance but the heavenly form and countenance of the risen Lord was gradually revealed to him. For the moment, he could not tell who it was that he saw, for Jesus was the last Person in all the world he expected to see. All that he heard at first was a voice saying to him in the vernacular Aramaic, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? It is hard for thee to kick against goads." What a startling announcement! Who is speaking? Is it an angel from the realms of light or the voice of a departed spirit? Surely it was not Jehovah, the God of Israel, that was speaking, for he was conscious of no wrong in persecuting the Christians. If this was a divine manifestation, and there was every indication that it was, Saul had reason to expect that God was about to honour him with a special commission to exterminate the Nazarenes. All along he had been looking upon his fanatical persecution as the crowning act of his life. Was it not out of regard for the true religion that he had adopted his present course? Surely there must be some mistake. But he cannot escape the accusing voice; he recognizes it as divine and he begins to feel that the implied rebuke is meant for him. Can it be true that in persecuting these people he had really been injuring himself more than he knew and kicking, as it were, against the goads of the divine Ploughman, who had called a sudden halt by felling the ox-like persecutor who was devastating the choicest part of the vineyard? Never in all his life had the possibility occurred to him that He whom he had blasphemed should be the Son of God. Still failing to

recognize either the voice or the Person that is speaking, the terror-stricken man now asks, "Who art Thou, Lord?" and receives the answer, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

What a terrible shock it must have been to the persecutor to learn that he had been fighting against God. This unmistakable reference to the name of Jesus cuts right across the line of Saul's prejudices and feelings. It was this name above all names that he loathed and hated. He knew what the rabbis and chief priests thought of the name. But since the bearer of the despised name is dead, he will persecute to the death every worshipper of the name of Jesus. It must have come to him with powerful surprise to learn that Jesus was alive and that in the eyes of heaven his persecuting mission, though directed in the present instance against the Christians of Damascus, was really aimed at Jesus Himself. As in Matthew 25:40 and elsewhere, so here, Jesus identifies Himself with His followers (compare Isa. 63:9). Saul is given to understand that he had been persecuting Jesus in His disciples. But the idea of the solidarity or oneness of the believer with the object of his faith was hardly new to a follower of the Hebrew religion. Nevertheless there was something totally new in the answer which he had received to his question. Formerly the general truth which the words declare had no meaning to the persecutor, so far as the Christians were concerned. To him the man he had been persecuting did not exist. He was a dead impostor who had been crucified as a criminal. His ignominious fate shows that the man was a deceiver, and the only application of the principle of solidarity in the case of these stubborn confessors that Saul would recognize was that they must share the fate of their dead Messiah. All this, however, is now changed by the appearance of the living Christ, who is identical with the historic Jesus of Naza-

reth. Jesus was not dead, as he had thought, but alive and enthroned as the Son of God with all the powers of divine omnipotence.

Suddenly there bursts upon his consciousness the awful truth that when he struck at the disciples he was really striking at his Master. At last it was perfectly clear what was meant by the apt figure of the ox-goad. This proverb is derived from the use of the goad in the hands of those who are ploughing or driving cattle. To Saul it was a parable of his new relation to Jesus. It is the picture of the ploughteam at work in the fields. Heretofore, the young Pharisee had harnessed himself and gone whither he would, but now the Ploughman he had seen near Damascus seized the straying ox and was about to harness him to a new task and drive him in an entirely new direction, whither he had never, never thought of going. The natural impulse of the ox would be to resist the will of the ploughman, for he had never gone that way before. To be yoked to the ploughteam of Jesus Christ would be equally distasteful to one who was laying waste the infant Church. But the presence of the ox-goad renders all resistance worse than vain. For Paul to resist the superior will of Jesus at the moment of his conversion, or from that time on, would be just as futile as for a beast that is yoked to the plough to kick against the sharp iron point of the long wooden pole in the hand of the driver. Though "it goes against the grain," to turn from his previous course, upon which he had staked his very life, he is resolved to resist Christ no longer by persecuting His disciples. Any effort on his part to interrupt the progress of the Church or to retard the advance of the Christian religion will be misdirected. Further opposition to the will of the Almighty will only recoil upon himself and lead to his undoing. In the full blaze of the heavenly light, Paul realizes how blind and short-sighted, after all, is human wisdom. He as a

finite creature, stumbling along on his self-chosen way, cannot set himself with impunity against the infinite powers of the risen Christ, whose Lordship must be recognized.

But he will do this willingly, yea gladly, in consideration of His mercy. The answer to his inquiry was not only a rebuke; it was filled with infinite love. It melted his heart and attached him to Christ forever. The heavenly Ploughman, who appeared to him, might have hurled the shaft of His righteous anger at the wilful destroyer in the vineyard and sent him to his doom. This might have happened, had Jesus been a man and nothing more, but the Man of Nazareth, who had made many a plough in the village carpenter shop, wanted to do some real ploughing in the man's heart so that he might become a fit instrument for apostolic service. Instead of destroying the raging Pharisee, He merely marks out for him a new course, honouring him with a most remarkable mission. Jesus of Nazareth in His heavenly exaltation comes to him with the call to the highest vocation on earth. He is bidden to rise and stand upon his feet (compare Ezek. 2:1-3). Having assumed the correct posture for the reception of the divine message, he learns from the lips of Jesus what the vision signifies. It has a practical purpose. The celestial light discloses to the straying wanderer the error and sin of his past life, lightening up at the same time the way of the cross, by which the convert is to be led to a saving knowledge of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord. At this unique ordination service Jesus Himself delivers the charge to the apostle of the nations, outlining the work assigned him and committing to him in embryo the substance of his message. Saul, or rather Paul, is to be a minister, a servant, a very slave in the service of Christ. As a minister of the Word, he is a witness, testifying what he has seen and heard, and supplementing what

he already knows by what is to be subsequently revealed to him.

In the elaboration of his message he was fortunate enough in being able to draw upon his enlightened knowledge of the Old Testament to show that Isaiah fifty-three and other prophecies, if rightly interpreted, are not at all inconsistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 26:22-23). On the contrary, the true idea of Old Testament religion is fully realized in the Christian faith. There is no conflict between a spiritual interpretation of Judaism and Christianity. The promises made to the fathers find their highest fulfilment in the risen Christ who has just appeared to the future apostle of the Gentiles. His work as a preacher will be to open men's eyes to the light of faith which he himself has seen, interpreting to both Jews and Gentiles the truth as it is in Jesus. Christ is to be the centre of his preaching. In his own theological thinking he naturally begins with the resurrection of Jesus, which lies at the bottom of the startling experience. He sees the brilliant light encircling the transfigured form of the risen Christ, who reveals Himself to the astonished man as the very Jesus whom he had persecuted in His disciples. He is intensely impressed with the fact that the glorified Christ identifies Himself with the crucified Nazarene. His resurrection from the dead demonstrates Him to be the promised Messiah who is the Son of God; that is an absolute certainty. Thus a flood of light is thrown upon the crucifixion. Israel's Messiah is essentially the suffering Servant of Isaiah fifty-three, who by His death on the cross brings the godless world to justification. The atoning death of the righteous Servant is the necessary prelude to His resurrection and exaltation at the right hand of God. The Damascus experience, of course, did not reveal all this full-blown to the new disciple. However, we can be quite sure that it contained the embryo of his

missionary message, just as the oak is contained in the living acorn. The resurrection is the starting-point of his theology. He has seen the risen Christ, heard His voice, and conversed with Him, receiving at the same time a brief outline of the work he is to do. Without a vision of the risen and exalted Christ the cross of Jesus would have had no meaning to a Jew, who believed that the promised Messiah could not die but that He would live and reign forever. He could never think of a political Messiah conquering His enemies through the gateway of a sacrificial death any more than his fellow countrymen, who believed in a triumphant and victorious Messiah, ruling over His enemies with a rod of iron. This was a great stumbling-block to the Jews. In their eyes the element of suffering in the life of Jesus nullified His claim to the Messiahship of Israel. Not so, says Paul, for according to a number of passages in the prophets the Messiah is subject to suffering and He shall reign forever "because He hath poured out His soul unto death." But with the fact of the resurrection firmly established by an experience too vivid to be doubted, we should expect to find the note of victory predominating in Paul's preaching. He loves to think of a Christ who conquered death—of a Christ who suffered and died and rose again that He might reign supreme in the hearts and lives of all believers, who must also die and rise again in a spiritual or religious as well as in a moral sense. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature."

As a minister and witness of Christ's resurrection and exaltation, the apostle is charged, among other things, with the duty of proclaiming the light of the gospel to all people, including the Gentiles, which is also in accord with the predictions of the great prophets. In his preaching among Jews and Gentiles he will stress the need of repentance, which is here defined as a turning of the people

to the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, accompanied by " works befitting their repentance " as an expression of sincerity of purpose and of a right attitude to God and man. This turning of the whole life to God is the outward expression of the inner change wrought in the heart and mind of the man who accepts the message of the transfigured cross. In Paul's case, conversion means a changed attitude toward the Person of Jesus. Or to express it in the figurative language of Acts 26: 14, we might say that the labouring ox in the field of Judaism had run wild in the fertile fields of Christianity, crushing the precious fruits of the Master's toil under the heel of Jewish ecclesiastical authority. The Master of the vineyard, armed with the ox-goad, overtakes the refractory animal on the way to Damascus, bringing the deadly enemy to a sudden stop under the constraint of an irresistible power. Saul is headed for Damascus, is seized by a higher power, and set on a new course. All at once the ardent persecutor turned right about face and became a zealous Christian apostle. God had shown him that Jesus was the Messiah. For once in his life Saul had to admit that prior to this he had been going in the wrong direction. His zeal for Judaism had been against the driving of the divine will. But out in the plains of Damascus Jesus takes sudden hold of the reins, assuming full mastery of Saul. The divine goad of the Ploughman sinks into his consciousness, leaving a wound which spells death to his Jewish prejudices against the Messiahship of Jesus. Henceforth he is a new man with different thoughts and aims. He has a different goal. He begins his course anew, trusting to the constraining power of the love of Christ to lead him on to the completion of his task in the Master's vineyard. This is what conversion means to Paul.

True religion, then, is like a straight road leading to the one true God. The prophets came, one by one, to point

out in a progressive way, how God could be found by His children on earth. In the fulness of time God sent forth His Son to show unto the children of men the true meaning of the way of salvation. Jesus laid bare to the world, both by word and example, the great heart of God. As God incarnate He could speak with authority as to the divine plan of salvation. He is the concrete embodiment of that plan; more than that, He is the way of salvation in His own Person. He says, "I am the Way" that leads to God. Most of the people to whom Jesus preached misunderstood Him and His message. They preferred the way of the law to the new way marked out by Jesus and His chosen apostles. The scribes and Pharisees considered Him a heretic and were instrumental in nailing Him to the cross. While Saul of Tarsus is not heard from during the public ministry of Jesus, he nevertheless shared the opinion of these defenders of the traditional paths by persecuting the Christians. He made up his mind to destroy them and so he became the chief persecuting instrument in the hands of the Jewish ecclesiastical authorities. A systematic persecution in Jerusalem and Judæa spread terror in the hearts of the Christians. They made haste to get out of Saul's way. They fled in mortal terror of the man, some seeking refuge on farms far out in the country, others going as far as Damascus. Having organized a persecuting expedition, he set his face toward Damascus. But toward the end of the journey something happened. He saw the risen Christ, who told him that he was going the wrong way. It was this experience that swung him from a course consistently pursued up to this point, and gave a new direction to the marvellous energies with which he was endowed. From that hour there was but one thing for him to do: to turn from the goal of Judaism to the course marked out for him by Jesus Christ. Figuratively expressed, it is a turning from the dim shadows of a par-

tial revelation to the full light of the gospel. To be converted, then, is to be taken out of one sphere and placed in another.

In the case of the Gentiles the contrast between the two spheres is even more pronounced. It is the difference between darkness and light. The two spheres are comparable to two kingdoms, the one under the dominion of evil or Satan and the other under the authority and control of God. Darkness is only another name for spiritual ignorance, and the word "light" is a common figure for the illuminating effect of the spiritual truths of Christianity. A change from the sphere of pagan darkness to the light of gospel truth is effected by turning from the power of Satan, whose kingdom is darkness, unto God, who is light. Paul is sent to open the eyes of Jews and Gentiles alike, turning them from the darkness of unbelief to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the world. He is to turn and convert them from the binding power of sin and Satan to the liberating gospel of the Son of God. Such repentance, if preached to Jews, involved a change of front with reference to the Messianic claims of Jesus and a corresponding willingness to bring the whole of life under his sovereign sway; if preached to the Gentiles, it would mean the abandonment of the pagan gods and a recognition of the claims of Jesus upon heart and life.

But in view of the tenacity of Jewish prejudices and of pagan ignorance, the testimony of such a witness will not always be acceptable. His witness-bearing will be stubbornly opposed by his own people, and he must expect persecution even among the Gentiles. The Master, however, will not forsake His faithful witness. There is given a promise of deliverance from his enemies, so that he may preach the gospel without fear until such time as the witness would be called upon to put the seal of martyrdom upon the message which he proclaimed. But to those who

receive the message with a contrite heart, there is granted perfect remission and the right of inheritance among Christ's followers, who have consecrated their lives to Him and His service. All these blessings are the result of faith in Christ Jesus. It is indispensable to salvation. Now what is meant by faith?

To Paul, faith is not merely mental assent to the historical facts of the life of Jesus, nor is it mere assent to the moral side of religion; it is more than that. It is trust and confidence in the promises of Christ and loyalty to His will; but it is even more than that. It is the reception of Christ into the soul and leads to complete oneness with Him. Faith is a receptive attitude to Christ. The man who believes in Christ is so completely identified with Him that he may draw constantly on the energizing, vitalizing power of limitless grace in the realization of His Master's aims and purposes for all mankind. The believer, renouncing all pride, self-confidence and self-sufficiency, depends absolutely upon his Lord in every emergency. His confidence in Christ cannot be shaken. This is vastly more than mental or moral assent. Faith in Christ brings the believer into union with God. It is primarily a spiritual relation depending upon the attitude of receptivity to spiritual influences. Faith is the personal union of the soul with Christ. It tends to make the believer more and more like the Master Himself. So long as this faith-relation remains undisturbed, Christ dwells in the man, transforming him into a new creature. Christ and the believer are one. He identifies Himself completely with His followers. Their wants and needs, their sorrows and afflictions are regarded by Him as His own. Whatever affects the disciple, affects the Master Himself; what He has, they have; His life is their life. If Christ dies for the sin of the world, the disciple dies to sin; if Jesus rises from the dead, the disciple rises to newness of

life. If Christ lives forever in a state of endless bliss and felicity, so shall the Christian. He is in Christ and Christ in him; the two are inseparable. Nothing but sin in one of its many forms, such as pride and unbelief or a lack of spiritual receptivity, can sever a union which is so vital to the Christian life.

Paul never wavered in his faith after the day of Damascus. If he was once a consistent persecutor he became no less a consistent Christian. From the time of his conversion he was dead to Judaistic legalism but alive in Christ. By the most unexpected turn of events he is brought face to face with Jesus of Nazareth whose Messianic claims he had so persistently denied. The crisis of his life is upon him. What shall he do? What any sensible man will do when he "sees the light"—surrender to Jesus and bow to His imperial will. The narrative in Acts 26 assumes that Saul of Tarsus surrenders. Years later, in looking back upon the momentous event, he explains to Festus and Agrippa why it was that he took the step which was so distasteful to the Jews. He did not become an apostle of the new faith on his own initiative. His apostolic commission rested not on human but divine authority. It was forced upon him by a heavenly vision which had brought him into conscious contact with the risen Christ. The goad of the heavenly Ploughman had sunk into his soul. That day Saul turned right around and forever kept to the new turn in his life. Who was he to resist a higher power? What he had seen and experienced was so overwhelming and convincing that he could not afford to disobey the voice of Jesus, commissioning him to preach the gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike. "Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." His commission came to him from above. It was no less a Person than the glorified Christ who converted the fiery persecutor into an equally zealous Christian apostle.

Nothing else could have done it. That was the thing to emphasize at Cæsarea. The remarkable experience of Ananias of Damascus and his part in the divine drama would have made no impression on Agrippa. After all, Ananias was only an obscure Roman subject who could do little to vindicate the divine origin of Paul's commission and the truth of the message proclaimed by him. He may have been favourably known to the Jews of Damascus and of Jerusalem, but he was a comparative stranger at Cæsarea. To a pleasure-seeking, light-hearted king it was a matter of no particular moment whether the man was a strict observer of the Mosaic law or not. Paul realized that anything he might say concerning Ananias while standing before Festus and Agrippa would carry no weight with his audience. Feeling that here was a great opportunity to witness for Christ, he limited himself to the most important aspects of his conversion for the purpose of making a greater impression upon the hearts and minds of his hearers. Having had no occasion to refer to the human agency by which the call of Christ was to become still clearer to him after three days of fasting and prayer in Damascus, he also omits his temporary blindness and the restoration of his sight through Ananias, as well as the act of baptism admitting him to Christian fellowship.

The situation was quite different when Paul sought to placate the Jewish mob outside the castle of Antonia (Acts 22). In this hurried, almost breathless address, which was delivered not in Greek but in Aramaic, Paul calms the excited multitude long enough to give a brief history of his life up to the time of his visit to Jerusalem, three years after his conversion. He speaks in rapid succession of his birthplace, Jewish parentage, rabbinical training, and persecuting zeal for the faith of the fathers. He then alludes to his experience on the way to Damascus in order to show that in championing the cause of Christianity which he

had once opposed he was acting in obedience to a voice from heaven. At noonday a heavenly light appears, he falls to the ground and hears a voice saying, " Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? " On inquiry he learns that it is " Jesus the Nazarene." But not wishing to arouse the slumbering wrath of his prejudiced hearers, he omits the instructions given him by Jesus with reference to his apostolic labours. At this point he relates part of the conversation between the heavenly Visitor and himself, instructing him what he was to do. The Lord tells him to go on to Damascus as he had planned and further light will come to him as to the immediate plan of procedure. After a passing allusion to the blinding effect of the brilliant light, making it necessary for him to be led into the city by his companions, he suddenly introduces into the argument a man whose testimony would be worth something to a Jewish audience. Paul, it will be remembered, had been accused by an angry mob of disloyalty to the Mosaic law. To refute the charge he refers to Ananias of Damascus, a Jew of high character and standing among the people, whom he met in the most extraordinary manner several days after his arrival in the city. The apostle describes him as a strict observer of the Mosaic law, having a good reputation among orthodox Jews. This information must have had a somewhat conciliatory effect upon the audience. The speaker, at any rate, was not interrupted as he recited to them some details of the remarkable visit. The first thing Ananias did was to restore his sight. From the words quoted by him it appears that Paul was sitting down at the time, blind and wondering what next? Ananias comes in and says, " Brother Saul, look up! " He looks up and with recovered sight sees the face of his benefactor. The latter now brings to him in true prophetic style a message from the God of Israel, agreeing in a most striking way with his own experience a short time before.

Ananias solemnly declares, " The God of our fathers chose thee to know His will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear the voice of His mouth." Paul wants his audience to know that in acting as he did he was in every step following the will of God. He is just as loyal to Jehovah as they are. The new turn in his life was not of his own choosing; it was of God's appointing. Therefore it is certainly unfair to call him a turncoat or renegade Jew. How could he do otherwise, when he saw and heard the Righteous One, as Ananias here asserts? While it is not expressly stated that Paul actually saw Christ, no one in the audience could fail to draw the inference in view of the fact that the title which is applied to Him is a familiar prophetic term for the expected Messianic King (Zech. 9:9).

Thus the people were given to understand that there had been granted to Paul an actual appearance of Christ near the gates of Damascus. The reason for the appearance was that he might be a " witness unto all men " of what he had seen and heard. His is a universal mission, but as yet the Gentiles are not directly mentioned for fear of irritating the Jews. Nothing is said of an exclusive mission to the Gentiles. That he was to become the apostle to the Gentiles in a very special sense may not have been so clear to him at the beginning of his career. The certainty of it must have grown upon him in the years immediately following his conversion. Indeed, he will soon tell his audience that he was compelled to recognize the painful fact three years later when he was praying in the temple. For the present, however, he will postpone discussing that phase of the subject until he is ready to describe his experience while worshipping in the most sacred spot on earth. In view of the deep-seated race prejudice of his hearers, Paul will not take it upon himself to base anything he may wish to say regarding his Gentile mission on any revelation or experience which either he or Ananias

may have had outside the Holy Land. All that he will say about Ananias at this critical moment is that the latter brought him into a more formal relation with the Church by the rite of Christian baptism, which was accompanied by the remission of sins, confessed by the penitent whilst "calling on the name of the Lord." Thus Paul has attained his object by showing that he was not introduced to Christianity by an opponent of Judaism, but by a strict Jew. Were the people then to infer that it was possible for a member of the Hebrew race to be a Christian without being a violator of the Mosaic law (compare Acts 21:20 ff.)? Yes, providing its observance was not regarded as the sum and substance of religion.

Having established his point as well as could be expected under the circumstances, the apostle next leads up to his Gentile mission. A period of three years (Gal. 1:18) is passed over by Paul without a word. During this time he had "proclaimed Jesus" in the synagogues of Damascus and sojourned in Arabia, the region occupied by the Nabatæan Arabs. But the events of these years will not offer a satisfactory explanation as to how he obtained his authority for preaching to the Gentiles. This he attempts to do by calling attention to his experience in the temple area three years after his conversion. On his return to the Holy City he went to the temple to pray and being in an ecstatic state, he heard the Lord saying unto him, "Make haste and depart quickly from Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me."

Paul's prayers must have been of the agonizing, wrestling type. He could become so absorbed in his devotions as to shut out completely from his consciousness the usual sights and sounds of the world outside. His deeply spiritual nature was quick to respond to spiritual influences. To him prayer was an indispensable means of keeping in touch with a world of spiritual realities. Prayer is the

road into the celestial courts of the Most High. The apostle could transport himself on the wings of prayer into another world and hold sweet converse with his Lord. The experience to which he refers on the castle stairs of the tower of Antonia, was not an imaginary one. He is not trying to deceive the Jews, or himself either, for that matter. It was a real experience. Its genuineness is vouched for by the fact that it was not superinduced by something that he wanted to hear. On the contrary, it taught him a most painful truth; for the loved his people. The Lord assures him that his unconverted countrymen, the Jews, will not believe him. But Paul, supposing Jerusalem to be his proper field of labour, expresses a desire to remain, urging his special fitness to preach in this very place, where he had shown so much zeal in the persecution of the Christians. Had he not at one time been just as hostile to the Christians as they are now? Was he not personally known to the inhabitants of the city, and could he not persuade them to believe that the great change which had come over his life necessarily pointed to God as the efficient cause? Would not the testimony of a man who had been such a zealous defender of Judaism have more weight among those who had witnessed the change in his character than among those to whom his previous life was unknown? Surely they could not doubt his sincerity, for if ever a man was sincere, he was when he pursued the Christians from pillar to post. They cannot help being impressed with the wonderful story of his conversion. But the Lord knows better. The command is, "Depart, for I will send thee far hence to Gentile nations."

It was the Lord and not Paul himself that caused his going to the Gentiles. This is what the apostle had been trying to convey to the minds of the people. He wanted them to see that he had preached to the Gentiles in response to a direct divine command. Prior to that he did

not wish to go. How gladly would he have laboured for his own people by preaching the gospel at Jerusalem. However, the divine command made that impossible. Henceforth his sphere of labour was not to be Jerusalem, but the world. Could Paul have said what he did in a more diplomatic way? And yet the people felt that he had used one word too many, the word "Gentiles." The charge against him had been that he had brought Trophimus, a Gentile, into the inner court. The notice warning foreigners against entering it read as follows, "No foreigner may enter within the railing or boundary line of the sanctuary. Whoever is caught is responsible to himself for his death, which will ensue." But the wild, angry shouts of the mob deprived Paul of the opportunity to disprove the accusation. Garments, dust and a shrieking multitude brought the address to an abrupt close. The whole tone of the speaker and the evident sincerity of his words ought to have impressed the Jews, if for no other reason. But the national pride of the Jews rebelled at the thought that the Messiah Himself, referred to in Paul's speech as the Lord, had commanded him in this very temple to forsake such a highly favoured people as the Jews and repair to the uncircumcised Gentiles. To proclaim, as he had done for many years, the free admission of believing Gentiles to equal privileges with the Jews in the kingdom of the Messiah was bad enough. But this is not all. He even makes it appear that the people of God should be rejected by the Messiah in favour of the Gentiles. What blasphemy! To their minds, the accusation preferred against him that he had broken the Mosaic law and profaned the temple by bringing an uncircumcised Gentile into the inner court needs no further proof. He must be guilty of the charge, for he himself has turned against his own national religion. What cared they about the religious experiences of such a man! Away with him!

This man's conversion and his temple experience, which meant so much to him, did not mean much to the noisy rabble. They did not represent the true spirit of Old Testament religion which found such noble expression in the psalmists and prophets, but of the national exclusivism of a perverted legalism. They failed to see in Paul a spiritual representative of prophetic universalism.

Their attitude toward his Gentile preaching was one of intense hostility. O blinded prejudice that will not see the light of the Sun of Righteousness shining at noonday over the plains of Damascus! The eyes of the people are closed to the illuminating rays of a great spiritual experience in the courts of the Lord on Mount Zion. Though God is near and they are standing on holy ground, they cannot follow their old acquaintance to the mountain top of vision and look with prophetic eyes into the inner sanctuary, all radiant with the glory of God and of His Christ. There may be a semblance of prayer without any conscious contact with the Unseen. Where there is no faith the people perish for lack of vision. To a receptive and believing heart God is always present. That direct access may be had into the King's presence was the experience of the apostle praying in the temple. It was to this prayer that we owe the mission of Paul to the Gentiles or rather the starting-point of the history of the universal Church. It brought to him the definite assurance that his duty lay in that direction, and he went forth to conquer the world for Christ.

Putting side by side the two accounts of Paul's conversion, recorded in Acts 26 and 22, we can easily see why the apostle should select certain aspects of the Damascus experience in addressing two different audiences. In each case a careful selection of the material is necessary owing to the urgent pressure of the moment. At Cæsarea the accusation was that Paul's Gentile mission was based on the supposed resurrection of the crucified Nazarene. The

indictment is that the prisoner is a deceiver of the worst type. The Sanhedrin has given him no authority to preach his false doctrines. He is a self-constituted apostle. In his defense before Agrippa, Paul puts the emphasis on the divine origin of his mission, basing it on the epoch-making event near Damascus. Neither the ruling council of the Jews nor any other earthly tribunal had anything to do with it. He received his call from the highest authority—from Jesus Himself, who appeared to him and conversed with him. He was to proclaim to all the world that he had seen and heard the risen Jesus. He did not invent the gospel. The underlying principles of his preaching would all be found in the instructions given him by Jesus. It was important therefore that this part of the conversation should be quoted. The words spoken by Jesus are the best refutation of the charge of heresy and wilful deception. Why should Paul hesitate to make repeated mention of Jesus in Agrippa's presence? With all his faults, Agrippa was far more accessible to Christian truth than a mob of prejudiced orthodox Jews clamouring for the blood of the apostle of the hated Nazarene. As Paul did not get his apostolic message from Ananias there was no reason for mentioning his name at the court of Festus. But in his defense before a threatening multitude the apostle gradually leads up to his Gentile mission by selecting another part of the conversation he had with Jesus on the Damascus road, telling him to complete his journey and he would find out what to do. He then speaks of Ananias, who came to him like a prophet, one day, restored his sight and brought him a message from the God of Israel. The remarkable thing about this message was that it coincided, in substance at least, with the commission which he had already received from the lips of Jesus. But as the crowd was in no mood to listen to such a commission as coming from Jesus, who had suffered

death for His unorthodox views, the best that Paul could do under the circumstances was to bring to their attention his experience with "one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good reputation among all the Jews residing in Damascus."

They were ready to listen for a few brief moments, and so he told them what he said. There was more to tell about Ananias than he could relate to an impatient and riotous assembly. What he wanted Ananias to say was that Paul had been divinely chosen to bear witness "unto all men" of what he had seen and heard. This information would furnish a splendid opening for his temple experience three years after his conversion. Paul's Gentile commission, already hinted at in the commission of Ananias, is now definitely expressed in unmistakable terms. With more time at his disposal, the apostle might have given a fuller description of Ananias and of how he came into possession of his prophetic message. Ananias is suddenly but skilfully introduced into the narrative as a man of legal piety, endowed with the power of healing and the gift of prophetic utterance. How all this came about is related in Luke's account of the scene in the ninth chapter of Acts, verses 9-19. Here we learn that Saul's blindness lasted three days. His thoughts and feelings during this time are reflected in a like period of fasting. Though all was dark without, the light of truth was beginning to burn in his soul. The light which he had seen so recently on the desert road had changed him from a furious persecutor into a penitent Christian. The proud scion of Judaism was a broken man. His temporary blindness, which shut him off from the distracting influences of a busy city, enabled him to concentrate his thoughts on the meaning of his recent experience. Saul abode in silent seclusion with the glare of that revealing light dazzling before his blinded eyes and the awful sound of the Master's voice ever ring-

ing in his ears. The thought of having persecuted Jesus filled his heart with unspeakable sadness. By so doing he had been at enmity with God. But the rebel is on his knees, confessing his sins and imploring divine forgiveness. He pours out his heart to God in agonizing prayer and finds a gracious God. Presently he sees in his blindness a man, previously unknown to him, coming into his room and healing him. The stranger also puts his hand upon his head, by which the blind man was given to understand that he was to be filled with the Holy Spirit for service in the Church.

Whether this revelation came to Saul in his sleeping or waking hours is not known. In the case of Ananias, however, it appears that the Lord spoke to him in a dream as He spoke to Samuel of old, and then receives the same answer as Samuel gave, "Behold, I am here, Lord." Thus one element of Joel's prediction regarding the Messianic age is being fulfilled in the visions and dreams of specially gifted disciples, not only in the mother Church at Jerusalem (Acts 2:17), but also among the Christians of Damascus. The gift of prophecy has now made its appearance in the small Christian community at Damascus. Ananias recognizes the voice of the Lord saying to him, "Arise and go into the street which is called Straight and inquire in the house of Judas for a Tarsean by the name of Saul, for behold, he prayeth!" Judas apparently was a man of more than average distinction to be able to entertain the official representative of the Sanhedrin. Saul, it seems, had told no one as yet of his conversion to Christianity. Had he done so the news of the event would have spread like wildfire through the city. Ananias knows nothing of the conversion. He hears the request of Jesus with alarm. To him Saul of Tarsus is a name of terror. Who among the Christians of Damascus has not heard of the notorious persecutor pursuing his victims everywhere?

The news of his present mission had preceded him and Ananias and his associates began to tremble for the safety of the flock. What could be the meaning of such a man's prayers? Is he asking for divine assistance in his bloody work? No; this is a different prayer. It is the prayer of a disciple asking for enlightenment as to the course he is to pursue after what has happened near Damascus. But Ananias is too terror-stricken to catch the full scope of his Master's words. He cannot understand how the pitiless commissioner of the Jewish senate should have experienced such a sudden change of heart. Saul of Tarsus was widely known as a sworn enemy of Christ and His cause. What a strange recruit to take the lead in the onward march of Christianity! Ananias cannot persuade himself to obey this command without registering a gentle protest, pleading as his excuse the well-known character of Saul and the nature of his errand to Damascus. But his fears give way to confidence when assured by the Lord that the persecutor was a marked man, chosen by Him to carry the gospel to the Gentiles and their kings as well as to the Israelites; in the discharge of that mission the persecutor would be persecuted and suffer many things for His name's sake.

The next morning Ananias went on his way and found the once-dreaded Saul looking forward to his visit with great eagerness. By the healing touch of a hand, divinely commissioned for the work, the film that had gathered over the eyeballs of the arch-persecutor fell from his eyes and he received, along with the restoration of his sight, the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit. Hereupon Saul is received into the brotherhood of the disciples by baptism. The new convert then partakes of food and tarries certain days with the disciples. We are not altogether certain whether it was at this time or after his return from Arabia that he preached Christ in the synagogues of Damascus to

the great amazement of all that heard him. This brief preaching mission originated in the natural desire of an energetic man to make the best possible use of what was to be a short stay in Damascus. Scales had indeed fallen from his eyes. He saw the old life as God sees it. This only increased his zeal to atone in a measure for the sins of the past. And now that he is fully equipped for Christian service, he cannot remain idle any longer. "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood" (Gal. 1:16), but "straightway" proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God. Increasing in spiritual and intellectual power, he "confounded the Jews." They knew the nature of his errand to Damascus. And yet, here was no wolf in sheep's clothing bent on taking unawares any Christians who may be visiting the synagogues. He preached with conviction, basing his teaching on his own experience and on his knowledge of the Scriptures. The new preacher threw his opponents into consternation when he began in public to prove the Messiahship of Jesus. He knows this by experience and is able to prove it by comparing the Messianic prophecies with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. His arguments for the humanity and deity of Jesus are unanswerable. His theology is all summed up in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Saul the Pharisee had become a Nazarene by conviction. But the courageous preacher will experience ere long how difficult it is to pull down a flint-like wall of prejudice by loving persuasion. In that attempt he must needs suffer many things for the sake of a suffering Christ. But the undaunted apostle knows full well that seeming defeat will ultimately issue into victory. He will conquer by the transfigured cross of the risen Christ, notwithstanding the resentful and fanatical hatred of the Jews or the philosophic scorn of supercilious Greeks.

In none of the three accounts of Saul's conversion, re-

corded in Acts 9, 22, and 26, do we have an absolutely complete account of all that occurred on this wonderful occasion. The three accounts really supplement each other. In his address before Agrippa, Paul dwells on the divine origin of his world mission. A world mission! What an interesting subject! That kind of a subject would appeal to a man like Agrippa, for he was a man of broad sympathies and of a somewhat tolerant spirit in matters of religion. His long residence in Rome contributed much to his international and universal outlook. An Idumæan by birth, he was more of a Roman than a Jew. Though nominally a member of the Jewish church and an admirer of some of the Jewish ideals, he could not help sympathizing in a way with the universalism of Paul's gospel as over against the commonly accepted but somewhat narrow-minded interpretations of the Jewish religion. He was the type of man who would be apt to listen with more than average interest to anything the apostle of the Gentiles might say with regard to the propagation of a freer, international gospel. Here at last was a religion with a universal appeal. There was nothing narrow or nationalistic about it. Race or colour seems to have nothing to do with it, for Paul speaks of a world mission. To Agrippa that kind of a gospel is most interesting, to say the least. Of course he will not come out in the open and say so. There is too much at stake for the Jewish king of the upper stretches of the east-Jordan country. But he will give the speaker a sympathetic hearing and listen to what he has to say about the divine origin of his mission. His apostolic call, he says, came directly from the risen Christ, who also commissioned him. Though many years have passed since then, he can still recall the terms of his commission as addressed to him by Jesus Himself. And to prove to the king that his call was based not on human but divine authority he quotes the very words of Jesus,

commissioning him to preach the gospel to Jews and Gentiles alike.

This explains why the incident of Ananias was omitted. Ananias only played a subordinate rôle anyway. Consequently no allusion is made to that other part of the conversation, where the penitent convert, desiring further light as to the plan of procedure, humbly asks, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (9:6; *cp.* 22:10). But in the address at Jerusalem the Ananias incident could not be omitted. It was the best entering-wedge the apostle had for the purpose in hand. Time was too pressing to describe in detail how Ananias received his prophetic message. Luke, the historian, gives the answer in Acts 9:10-16. How Luke obtained the information is not stated. Evidently Ananias himself related the details of his vision first to Paul, who in turn gave the information to Luke. To Paul it was of the greatest importance that Ananias, who was a total stranger to him, should have a vision about the same time agreeing in all essentials with his own. It was important enough for Luke to include in his historical narrative because it would render the sudden conversion of the persecutor somewhat more intelligible. And yet the space at Luke's command is so limited and his account so brief that he omits some of the details of the vision. So, for instance, in announcing the purpose of his visit Ananias says, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me" (9:17), or, as we have it in the words quoted by Paul as reported by Luke in Acts 22:14-15, "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee that thou shouldest know His will, and see the Righteous One, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth. For thou shalt be a witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard." This implies that

Ananias received more information concerning the conversion of Saul than Luke records. Luke cannot give a detailed account of everything that happened in connection with Paul's conversion: to do so would have required a book on a much larger scale than the Acts of the Apostles. But he has given us sufficient material for the reconstruction of the whole scene, not only on the desert road near the gates of Damascus, but also in the city on Paul's arrival there. Minor differences in the three accounts do not obscure the main facts in the case. These can be harmonized without much difficulty, so that the picture that we get of the event is a clear and vivid one.

By a comparison of the threefold account we get the following picture: It is twelve o'clock noon. A caravan is approaching Damascus from the road leading to Jerusalem. A week's journey is almost at an end. But suddenly there is a halt. The leader of the caravan and his companions fall to the ground. They are perplexed, bewildered, terrified. The sun is shining overhead. That something awful has happened is clear to all. But only Saul of Tarsus seems to know what it is all about. He sees a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun shining at high noon. He hears a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? It is hard for thee to kick against goads." Thinking that the voice of the Speaker might be that of an angel or a higher being of some sort, Saul reverently asks, "Who art Thou, Lord?" and receives the reply, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Having heard the name, he looks up and recognizes in the dazzling light the heavenly form and countenance of the risen Christ. He rises to his feet as requested, and receives a direct call to preach to both Jews and Gentiles, but more especially to the latter (26:16-19). But Saul of Tarsus had never thought of such a call before. Hence he is at a loss to know what to

do for the moment, and so he says, "What shall I do, Lord?" Forthwith he is commanded to proceed to Damascus and God's will concerning him will be made known to him in due time (22:10-11; 9:6-8). Stunned and blinded, Saul is led by the hand through the city gate to the principal street of the city. The sad procession stops at the house of Judas, where suitable lodgings are found for the chief of the caravan. He is ushered into a room and he lies down to rest. But the blind man feels that this is no time for rest. He changes his posture and assumes the attitude of prayer. Many an hour is spent in quiet meditation and agonizing prayer. He is too much absorbed in his own thoughts to think of taking food. His present needs cannot be expressed in terms of bodily food. He craves the privilege of serving Christ under more favourable circumstances. How gladly he would preach the gospel if he could only see with his eyes! If the supernatural light which he saw outside the city gates could bring about such a transformation and fill his soul with the light of a new life, would it not be possible for the same power to effect the lesser miracle by curing his blinded vision? But how is this to be accomplished? Surely Christ can heal him. He sinks upon his knees and prays and prays and he prevails! He sees a man coming to him and healing his eyes. This man is not the Christ he has seen in the supernatural light, but the indwelling Christ in a humble believer.

Meanwhile, in another part of the city, the Lord appears in a dream to a disciple, named Ananias, informing him that the fiery zeal of the persecutor should henceforth burn itself out in lifelong apostolic service. The man's scruples are overcome by a revealing glimpse of the epoch-making scene on the Damascus road. The next morning he proceeds to the house of Judas, welcomes Saul as a disciple, lays his hands upon him, restores his sight, com-

municates to him the gift of the Holy Spirit for service, baptizes him and conveys to him the message of Jesus (9:10-19; 22:12-16). Three years later, while praying in the temple, the apostle is commanded to leave Jerusalem immediately, as his preaching there would be of no avail. But as the temple vision came after the Damascus experience we conclude this part of our sketch by saying that amid all the details which fill in the picture, one fact stands out above all others, and that is, that Saul of Tarsus was a changed man; he had seen Jesus and had received a direct call to preach the gospel. This is also borne out by Paul's allusions to the event in his Epistles. He only refers to it in connection with some other subject under consideration. There is no need for describing in detail the momentous change in his life, since the people to whom he wrote already knew of his conversion. While these references are few and far between, they are nevertheless emphatic and uniform. They all point to the great central fact that lies behind the Damascus experience, and it is this, Saul of Tarsus became a Christian apostle by a personal revelation of Jesus Christ.

It is to this experience that he refers in the first chapter of Galatians, not for its own sake, but for the sake of meeting the attacks of his Jewish opponents, who had called in question his apostolic authority. During Paul's absence from Galatia, certain Jews, introducing themselves as preachers of the gospel, took it upon themselves to preach a gospel differing radically from the one already proclaimed by the apostle. These self-appointed teachers looked upon themselves as the faithful custodians of the teachings of Jesus. They had the genuine gospel. They laid stress on having known Jesus in the flesh. The apostle to the Gentiles had not enjoyed such a privilege. Paul's gospel, they asserted, needed supplementing at various points. They have come to render it more complete. As

originally delivered to the Galatians it is positively misleading and false. In truth, however, they manifested greater zeal for Moses than for Christ. They had taken offense at Paul's gospel, because of its emphasis upon salvation by faith in Christ. They were of the opinion that the Mosaic law should apply to Jews and Gentiles alike. They concluded that the Gentiles should submit to the rite of circumcision, which was the sign of the old covenant. But as this would destroy the foundation-principle of his gospel, which centred in Christ, Paul could not yield to his opponents on this point. He was in duty bound to tell them that his gospel was not founded on any external works prescribed by the law of Moses. He is the messenger, not of the old but of the new covenant. The law has fulfilled its purpose by pointing men to Christ. What the law could not do, Christ has done. He has fulfilled the law, thereby setting up a new standard of obedience. He Himself is the standard of the new kingdom. In the kingdom of the Messiah everything depends upon a personal relation to Jesus Christ and not upon a man's relation to the law. A soul-transforming faith in Christ takes the place of mere outward conformity to certain legal requirements.

The Old Testament itself ought to convince his critics of the correctness of his gospel-message. Abraham was justified not by a law enacted several centuries after his time, but by faith in God's promises. These have now been fulfilled in Christ. Paul will proclaim that truth in spite of the Judaizers in Galatia or anywhere else. Any teaching which is at variance with his gospel is no gospel at all. He will write to the churches of Galatia and warn them against the false teachers, who want to rob them of their gospel liberty. Should his opponents persist in challenging his apostolic authority, he will have to inform them that he did not invent his gospel to please the Gen-

tile wing of the Church. He is no men-pleaser. The charge that he was swayed by personal considerations in preaching his gospel is ludicrous. It is disproved by his conversion. From a merely human standpoint he had nothing to gain by becoming a Christian. He knew at the outset that it would mean a life of poverty, privation and persecution. And yet his antagonists have the audacity to question his motives! His zeal for the Jewish religion before he was converted ought to convince them that he could not have been transformed into a Christian apostle by mere human means. He did not receive his apostleship to the Gentiles at second-hand through the agency of Ananias, Barnabas, Peter or any other disciple they might mention. As a determined persecutor of the Christians he was inaccessible to any Christian influences which might have led to his conversion. The Christian channel into which his life was directed was not cut out by human hands or by the will of man; something else was needed to blast the rock of his Jewish prejudices and convictions. He received his commission not from any human source, but from God through a "revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:12).

The gospel which he preached was not from men or through men in the same sense that the immediate disciples were not from men or through men, for he, as well as the original Twelve, was called directly and personally by Christ. He did not sit down and work it out through an intellectual process. It came from God through Jesus Christ. His faith in Christ and his understanding of the gospel were not due to any human agency. Christ, in converting and calling him, used no human instrumentality. The great change in his life was wholly independent of the older apostles, nor did he go up to Jerusalem to confer with them until three years later, and even then he saw only Peter and James the Lord's brother. Ananias played

but an external part in the divine drama. When he appears on the scene the converted man has already received his commission directly from Christ. Ananias, strictly speaking, had nothing to do with his conversion, except in an administrative or sacramental way perhaps. The conversion itself was a sudden, unheralded event. Saul never had such a surprise in all his life. The Galatians, of course, know of his conversion. But he cannot help thinking of it and alluding to it. The Judaizers in the Galatian Church did not openly deny that Christ had appeared to him on the way to Damascus. They could not do that, when the Damascus experience had already been recognized as a fact by the apostles at Jerusalem. To deny openly that Christ had appeared to Paul would have defeated their purpose. Hence they are willing to go as far as to say that Jesus may have appeared to him, but they can never admit that Jesus had given him the gospel which he preached in Galatia. They hinted that the leaders in the mother Church at Jerusalem had little sympathy with it. Their claim was that Paul had accommodated his gospel to the wishes and prejudices of his Gentile hearers. Nevertheless he will remind these false brethren of the momentous scene, in view of their contention that he did not receive his gospel from Christ. He wants them to remember that one day, while on a mission of persecution to Damascus, the risen Christ suddenly appeared to him in a visible and audible form. He heard the voice of Jesus commanding him, in a conversation of some length, to preach the faith which he had once destroyed. He is to proclaim to all the world that Jesus of Nazareth is risen from the dead. He knows this to be true because he saw Him alive. To him the resurrection is a fact. Nothing is more certain. He saw the risen, glorified Christ. This Christ is a divine Being, with full knowledge of the secrets of the heart and all-powerful. If that is the case, the

Preacher of Galilee is not merely a Jewish Messiah. He is the Son of God, who is the God of Jews and Gentiles alike. Jesus therefore is a universal Saviour.

All this comes to him through the revealing light of Christ's appearance at the time of his conversion. While he may not have known all the details of the life of Christ, he knew the main thing from the very beginning of his Christian career. The glorified Son of the only true God has been revealed to him in the person of the crucified but risen Jesus. The cross is no longer a stumbling-block. The Christian believer is liberated from sin by the innocent Sufferer on the cross (1:4). The benefits of Christ's death and resurrection are for all. It was the Damascus experience, then, that qualified him to call the Gentiles to the Christian fold. Jesus revealed Himself to him and gave him the gospel which he preached, as well as the call to preach it. "It pleased God who called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him among the Gentiles" (1:15-16). Here we have a definite allusion to the conversion. According to the narrative in Acts, Paul had seen a great light and heard the commissioning voice of the resurrected Jesus. Both Paul and Luke speak of the event as an external manifestation of Jesus, who appears to the persecutor in a visible and audible form. But the experience must not be regarded as something merely external; it was also internal. There is a great deal more in the Damascus experience than a mere excitation of the senses. The living and exalted Christ is a spiritual Being. He must be spiritually apprehended. Spirituality in religion is more than an emotional thrill. An appeal to the senses is not enough. Nor is it sufficient for a man to have seen the Lord Jesus with his eyes and to have heard His voice. The light without must burn and shine within, and the voice of Jesus must become audible in the depths of conscience. Saul of Tarsus cannot be-

come a Christian missionary without an inner, spiritual response to the revealing light and the commissioning voice. His apostolic commission is grounded in the internal revelation of Christ as the Son of God. There can be no call to apostleship without an inward transformation of the man who had persecuted the followers of a crucified and supposedly dead Messiah. A profound spiritual experience is necessary to change the persecuting Pharisee into a persecuted apostle.

In his unconverted days it was utterly impossible for him to see anything in Jesus but a deceiver of the people, whose death on the cross had put an end to His Messianic pretensions. A veil of prejudices had blinded the eyes of Saul to the divine glory of a crucified Deliverer, conquering through sacrifice. The only Messiah he had known was a Messiah of the fleshly Jewish type. To Saul the cross was a cross of shame and not of glory. His conception of Israel's Christ had to be spiritualized. The earthly and human conception must give place to an inward vision of Christ's true greatness. Faith must be kindled in his heart in the Messiahship of the crucified Nazarene. There is still lacking an internal revelation of Jesus as the Son of God. This alone will remove the veil of spiritual ignorance in the mind and heart of the persecutor. And this is what happened near Damascus. Saul's conversion was rendered possible by an external manifestation of Jesus and an inward illumination of the man's heart, enabling him to see the meaning of the cross in the light of Christ's resurrection. It was his privilege to have a personal interview with Jesus of Nazareth after His death, and he now sees Jesus in His true nature as God's Son and as the Redeemer of the world. The cross is the emblem of the greatest victory ever achieved on earth. What was formerly a stumbling-block has suddenly been converted into an indispensable part of the glad tidings of salvation. At

that decisive hour Paul saw the light of a new day shining in his heart. What light is to the physical world, Jesus is to the soul. In II Corinthians 4:6 the apostle compares the experience to the first day of creation. The glorious vision of the Son of God opened up to him a new world. It reminds him of the creative dawn of Genesis 1:3. The same God who dispelled the darkness of a chaotic world has converted him into a torch-bearer of God's own light shining on the suffering but glorified brow of the Son of God. By another creative act at the beginning of the Christian era, God had shone in the heart of Saul to give "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." He is the bearer of a world-illuminating gospel. He must proclaim to all the world that he has seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The divine epiphany, then, is not an ordinary seeing and hearing with the physical senses. Whatever else it may be, it is an inward experience. It is a spiritual birth of Christ in the soul of the new convert. Out of the revelation of the Son of God within him is born the conviction that Christ lives in him (Gal. 2:20). The "in me" of our passage in Galatians (1:16) points to a mystic union with Christ. Paul is united with Christ, who has redeemed him by making him completely one with Himself. This oneness between himself and the Messiah is a very real thing. It is more than a oneness of mind or heart or will, more even than the possession of a Christ-like character. Saul, after his conversion, is actually one with Christ in nature. His life has been enriched by the incoming of a divine power. To Paul, Christ is not simply a great historic figure, thought of as belonging to the past, and with whom he may commune at stated intervals, but an ever-present reality, functioning as an energizing, life-giving and transforming power in heart and life. The spiritual,

living Christ is in Paul, and Paul the Christian believer is in Christ. This indwelling of Christ began at Damascus. Since that day Paul felt the presence of a new life within himself. The old Saul cannot recognize himself. The spiritual entrance of the living Christ into his inmost soul had resulted in a marvellous transformation. New powers burst forth into being. He says, "I can do all things through Him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). The old life is gone. The life which he now lives is lived in conscious communion with the indwelling Christ. He is a saved man because Christ has taken up His abode in him. Paul and Jesus are one. There is an identity of interests, of purpose and of action. The personality of the one has been merged into that of the other. By this union a new spiritual element has come into the life of Paul. The power of sin in the old Adam has been broken and Paul is a new creature.

It is well to bear in mind this twofold aspect of Paul's conversion. In his defense before Festus and Agrippa, Paul emphasizes the external circumstances of the divine call. These would be more apt to impress the audience than the inner change wrought in his heart. But the situation in Galatia called for a different treatment. The passage in Galatians brings out the inner aspect of the conversion. Paul meets the attack of the false brethren there by stating most emphatically that the gospel to which they objected was the outcome of a great spiritual experience. His gospel has to do with a spiritual, living world-Messiah and not a carnal Messiah of the Jewish type. It is a spiritual and not a man-made gospel that he is preaching. The dominant note in meeting the objections of his critics is not upon the more striking, external details of the Damascus experience. That would never do in the present instance. The Judaizers were preaching a gospel based on a Jewish understanding of the life of Jesus. They had

externalized the glorious facts of the gospel. Men who have never caught the spirit of Jesus must be taught to see the spiritual side of Christianity. He once thought of Christ as they did. But he has had a great spiritual experience. God revealed His Son to his inner consciousness as a spiritual Being. What a fallacy, therefore, to put Moses and Christ on the same plane. The living, glorified Christ is above Moses. The Son of God has the right to set down His own terms of admission into the new kingdom. Christianity cannot be pressed into the narrow, legal mould of external performances. Christ is spirit and He is life!

Some writers on the life of Paul seek to discredit the external features of the conversion in the book of Acts by pointing to Galatians 1 : 16, as if the Damascus experience was nothing but a spiritual revelation of Christ to the soul. Such a view, however, fails to do justice to all the facts in the case. Paul's object in writing to the Galatians is to show that his spiritual conception of Christ goes back to a great spiritual experience. God, he says, revealed His Son in him for the express purpose of enabling him to proclaim to the Gentiles a spiritual world-Messiah. The Judaizers had no such experience, and that is why they offered to the Galatian converts a Jewish Messiah. They held fast to the outer shell of the life of Jesus as it manifested itself in the days of His flesh. That He was a member of the covenant race and kept the law stood out so prominently in their preaching that the real Christ was in danger of being lost to the Church. Paul saw the dangerous trend of the whole movement. He came to the rescue by presenting the inner phase of his conversion, which lay at the bottom of his deeply spiritual conception of Christ. The kernel of his preaching is not a materialistic Christ, hemmed in on every side by the limitations of Jewish ceremonial laws, but a universal Messiah of a spiritual type.

The principles and teachings of the historic Jesus have come to their highest fruition in the spiritual experience of Paul.

But our subject is not exhausted by affirming that the experience referred to in Galatians 1 : 16 was of a spiritual character. There is reason to believe that it was external as well as internal. The revelation of Jesus to Paul was not confined to the inner consciousness. Before the day of Damascus his eye of faith was closed to the spiritual glory of the Crucified. It was not opened by the ordinary operation of spiritual laws within the realm of human personality. In the case of Saul of Tarsus something out of the ordinary was needed to remove the scales from his eyes. In I Corinthians 9 : 1 and 15 : 8 he tells us what it was that brought about the change. The sum and substance of the two passages is that Paul has seen the risen Lord. In I Corinthians 9 : 1 he asks, "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" This is his reply to the false Jewish brethren, who had raised a discussion at Corinth regarding the nature of Christ's appearance to Saul of Tarsus. They questioned the reality of his experience. They tried to make his converts believe that he was no real apostle because he had never seen the Lord Jesus. Possibly they looked upon Paul's statement in Galatians as an evasion of the main issue. An inner revelation, they urged, is something so vague and uncertain. Who knows whether there is anything to it? If there were, he would not have spoken of it as a spiritual experience. In fact, they are positively certain that what he thinks he saw and heard, lacked objective reality. But Paul loses no time in telling the Corinthians that no matter what others may say and do, they certainly cannot doubt the reality of his conversion, when they themselves were converted by the compelling power of a convincing message. If a tree is to be judged by its fruits, then the fruits of his labours prove

the call. The Corinthian converts are the living proof of his apostleship. The experience to which the Judaizers refer was real enough, and so was the call to apostolic service. However others may interpret the vision which led to his conversion, to Paul it was something objectively real. He had a real experience. It was not the result of a vivid imagination. He actually saw the real Christ with his bodily eyes.

When he speaks of seeing the Lord Jesus, he does not mean that he saw Jesus during His earthly life. In the passage before us he connects his apostleship with his having seen the Lord. This shows that he is thinking of the appearance of Christ to him on the way to Damascus which was just as real as the appearances of the risen Jesus to the disciples. What he is anxious to establish is that he has just as good a right to be called an apostle as any of the Twelve. If the original apostles received their commission immediately from the lips of Jesus, so did he. He saw Jesus as they had seen Him after the resurrection. He, too, is an eye-witness who can testify to Christ's victory over death. In I Corinthians 15:8 he declares Christ appeared to him as He had appeared to the other apostles. He also hints that the resurrection appearances of Jesus were now closed, the appearance of Christ to him being the last in the series. Possibly he was included in that series because God had more to say to man than had already been said by the twelve apostles. In listing these appearances he writes, "And last of all as to an abortion He appeared to me also." Like an abortive offspring, Saul of Tarsus came into a new world under abnormal circumstances. His older brothers in the apostolic family had a more normal development. They entered upon their apostolic labours after spending a year or more in the company of Jesus who called, trained and commissioned them for special service. They were the fruit of the Mas-

ter's patience and toil. While that fruit did not mature any too soon, they had at least a growing faith in Jesus of Galilee and they had seen the risen Lord.

Saul, on the other hand, had no such faith before starting for Damascus. In fact he had no faith at all in the Messiahship of Jesus. He was a violent persecutor bent on destroying the Christians. And to think that such a man should be favoured with a divine call to preach the gospel to the Gentiles! His apostolic birth defied the ordinary laws of spiritual growth. There is nothing natural about his entrance into the apostolic family. He was by no means ready for such a spiritual birth. It was a sudden, revolutionizing change, involving a complete rupture with the past. He resembles a fœtus torn prematurely from the maternal womb. He is not a normal child at all in the spiritual realm. All these years he had been developing along the most conservative Pharisaic lines, but on that momentous journey from Jerusalem to Damascus he was torn, as by a violent operation, from his former surroundings to which he had been clinging with all the fibres of his being, and placed in a new world. Had it not been for the divine favour and the quickening power of God's mercy, he could never have survived the awful experience through which he passed on the road to Damascus. How terrible must have been the agony when he first looked into the face of Jesus, whom he had persecuted in His disciples! The remembrance of it makes him positively unhappy. He is not worthy to be called an apostle. The lowest place in the apostolic group is much too good for a rebel such as he was. Yet through the favour shown him from on high and the divine power working within him, he surpassed in toil and suffering all the other apostles. The subdued rebel takes no personal credit for this. He owes it all to the undeserved favour of God who girded and equipped him for apostolic service (I Cor. 15:9-10).

In the passages we have quoted from the Epistles, Paul connects the appearance of the risen Christ with his apostolic mission. I Corinthians, as we have seen, emphasizes more especially the external side of the experience. This was Paul's answer to those who had said that he had never seen Jesus. As in Galatia, so at Corinth, Paul could not help telling his converts about his own conversion. And so all that we have in these two Epistles is a passing reference to that decisive moment of his life, when he himself was converted. The passage in Galatians reveals the internal character of the event. It was no superficial experience of Christ such as the false brethren had experienced. A deeply spiritual conception of Christ argues a spiritual experience. The universal truths of Christianity cannot be narrowed down to suit the national prejudices of the Jewish people. The moment that is done, its claim to universality is lost. While on earth Jesus did indeed live and work among the Jews, but the activity of the risen, glorified Christ is no longer limited to any particular race. It is also worth remembering that the principles laid down by Him in His teaching and preaching activity are universally true. And the time has come when they should be applied universally. Jesus did say to the woman of Samaria that salvation is of the Jews. But the fact that she was a Samaritan clearly indicates that He was even then thinking of drawing all men into the net of the gospel. That is to be the task of the men who had caught His spirit. The Christ who revealed Himself to Paul belongs to a needy world. Paul is the immediate messenger of the risen Lord, prepared by a special revelation for world-conquest. Faith in a living, universal Christ is something quite different from the narrow legalistic program of the false preachers in Galatia, who seemed to think that every Gentile would have to become a Jew before he could become a Christian.

Taking together all these passages from Paul's Epistles we have a picture not unlike that of Acts 26, of a sudden spiritual transformation and call to apostolic service, brought about by an appearance of the risen Lord. Mention is made of the same appearance in Acts 9 and 22, where part of the conversation between Jesus and Paul is also recorded. To Paul the divine epiphany was both external and internal. He regarded it as something unique. Its reality was beyond question. He stoutly maintained to his dying day that he had witnessed an external appearance of the risen Christ, who conversed with him and sent him on his mission. He had a most convincing experience. His own countrymen may quibble about it and question the reality of his experience—they may call him a visionary, a men-pleaser, a deceiver, a prevaricator and a liar—they may even follow him with malicious intent from one city to another and persecute him and stone him almost to death—he will die a thousand deaths rather than deny the reality of his Damascus experience. He has seen and he has heard with the result that he suddenly found himself in a new world of spiritual realities. That world was the Christian world. He, too, could say with the blind man whose sight had been miraculously restored that " whereas I was blind, now I see " (John 9:25).

But a man need not be a Pharisee to treat with contempt this miracle of healing, or a Judaizer to question the reality of Christ's appearance to Saul of Tarsus. An event which lies so far outside the ordinary experience of men is bound to be interpreted in different ways by men of varying shades of religious belief. Many so-called explanations do not explain the problem. Some of them are too fanciful even to mention, as for example, the idle story invented by a heretical Jewish Christian sect of the second century known as Ebionites. To these descendants of the Judaizers of the apostolic age Jesus was only a mere man.

They were intensely hostile to the apostle of the Gentiles and rejected his writings because of his attitude toward the rite of circumcision and the Jewish law in general. They asserted that he was no Jew at all, that he was a Gentile by birth, who fell in love with the daughter of the high priest in Jerusalem and submitted to circumcision in order to marry her, but finding himself deceived by the high priest, he took revenge and attacked the Mosaic law.

Mention is made in the Clementine Homilies (170-200 A. D.) of an equally unworthy attempt on the part of certain Judaizers to discredit the reality of Paul's experience by insinuating that Paul's account of the event was either a fraudulent invention, or if Jesus appeared to him at all, He did so to vent His wrath upon the dangerous adversary and to check his persecuting zeal. The reader is left to infer that Paul's Gentile mission must have been the result of an illusion of some kind.

These idle speculations of the old Judaizing heresy call to mind the attempt of a later day to assign the conversion and call of the apostle to the natural sphere of every-day life. The only difference between the former and the latter seems to be that the theorists of more modern times are far more positive in their assertions than the speculating Judaizers of the early Christian centuries. Renan, for example, positively assures us that Paul was the victim of an hallucination due to moral and physical causes of an abnormal character. "Every step to Damascus," he says, "excited in Paul bitter repentance; the shameful task of the hangman was intolerable to him; he felt as if he was kicking against the goads; the fatigue of travel added to his depression; a malignant fever suddenly seized him; the blood rushed to his head; the mind was filled with a picture of midnight darkness broken by lightning flashes; it is probable that one of those sudden storms of Mount Hermon broke out which are unequalled for vehemence,

and to the Jew the thunder was the voice of God, the lightning the fire of God. Certain it is that by a fearful stroke the persecutor was thrown on the ground and deprived of his senses; in his feverish delirium he mistook the lightning for a heavenly vision, the voice of thunder for a voice from heaven; inflamed eyes, the beginning of ophthalmia, aided the delusion."

This recital, of course, is purely conjectural. The physical causes enumerated by the author were taken over by him almost bodily from his rationalistic predecessors who attributed the conversion to the delirium of brain-fever and to a violent storm accompanied by lightning and thunder. According to the theory, fatigue and sore eyes, a thunder-storm and a brain-storm, gave rise to the illusions which the apostle took in good faith for an appearance of the risen Christ. With the blood thus rushing to his head the poor man failed to distinguish an ordinary natural occurrence from a supernatural vision. However, we cannot help remarking in a modest way that when he gets well and returns to normalcy this delirium, unlike that of other patients, still abides. The apostle never ceased telling the world what he had seen and heard on the road to Damascus. If his great service to humanity was founded on a mistake and if he was simply a visionary, would it not have been to his advantage to follow the line of least resistance and neutralize the Damascus experience by another imaginary experience during one of the many thunder-storms of the rainy season, admonishing him to carry the work of inquisition to a glorious consummation? For, was he not engaged in a Holy War at the time?

"But," says the critic, "let me state the argument more fully. The physical factors are important, but they do not explain the 'heavenly vision.' In my theory, the principal stress is laid on the element of remorse. The principal

cause of Saul's conversion is remorse of conscience. The bloody work of persecution was a terrible shock to his keen sensibilities and refined tastes. On that memorable journey he felt increasingly sorry that he had ever taken upon himself the execution of such an odious task. Toward the end of the journey he found himself struggling against the pangs of conscience, and that is what is meant by 'kicking against the goads.' The struggle reached its climax at or near Damascus when all the conditions were favourable."

Let us now pause for a moment and examine the evidence with respect to the moral factor urged by Renan and others. The theory of remorse flatly contradicts the express testimony of Paul himself and of the three accounts in the book of Acts. There is not the slightest hint anywhere that the persecutor had any scruples of conscience as to the justice of his cause before he reached the scene of his conversion. The passage in Acts 26:14 does not imply that Saul had been kicking against the goads of agonizing remorse, and that the thunder-storm came along to help him out of his predicament, but rather that the straying animal in the Master's vineyard had been brought to a sudden halt by the ox-goad of the divine Ploughman. Instead of girding himself and going where he pleases, he is suddenly seized by his new Master and harnessed to the ploughteam of Jesus Christ. Before that memorable hour he had no scruples as to whether or not he should persecute the Christians. According to Acts 26:9, this interpretation agrees with Paul's own statement at Cæsarea. He solemnly declares, "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." He hated the Galilæan Prophet and His new religion. He was resolved to persecute to the bitter end all that were deluded by Him. To a discerning mind these Christians would ere long destroy the traditional in-

stitutions by their perverted delusion. Saul, the Pharisee, did his level best to uphold and preserve the precious heritage of Israel's religion. And he did it in good conscience, too. He courageously affirms in the presence of the ruling council of the Jews that he had lived in all good conscience until that day and certainly ever afterwards (Acts 23:1). He voluntarily undertook his errand to Damascus, conscientiously believing that it was God's will. Of course, he learned of his mistake several days later. The memory of it fills his heart with grief and keeps him humble in after days. Speaking of his work of persecution in writing to Timothy he says, "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (I Tim. 1:13). His guilt as a persecutor is not the guilt of a wilful sinner consciously fighting against remorse. Luke virtually tells us that Paul felt no remorse. Paul himself tells us that he felt none; he really believed that by persecuting the Christians he was doing God a special service. He is ignorant of any admonitions of conscience urging him in an opposite direction. He is right in setting his face against the dangerous heresy. That last persecuting journey is undertaken not to ease a disquieted and troubled conscience, but in response to a most pressing duty. And then something happened on the way. According to the Bible, Saul of Tarsus saw a supernatural light, heard a heavenly voice and engaged in a conversation of some length with the risen Christ.

It has been urged that the whole experience was a delusion. He was blinded, it is said, not by a supernatural light, but by a flash of lightning. But, according to the account of the conversion given in the book of Acts, the light referred to was no flash of lightning. It is related that as Saul went on his journey and had now drawn near to Damascus, there shone round about him and his companions a light from heaven above the brightness of the

noonday sun. The sun was shining at the time. The glorious light came out of a clear sky. The guardsmen, too, saw the light but not the risen Christ, who was in the light. They also heard a strange sound as of one speaking, but they did not understand what was said. All this happened in broad daylight, when the sun was shining. There was no deception about it, nor can it be said that it was a delusion. It was no hallucination, otherwise these matter-of-fact policemen could not have seen the wonderful light and heard the voice. That they did not see Jesus, who was in the light, or understand His words does not disprove that Paul saw Him and conversed with Him. The hallucination theory does not fit the facts.

A more scientific method of approach to the problem is found in the attempt of the Tübingen School to explain the conversion of Paul as a natural psychological process. But the psychological method of its foremost representatives does not solve the problem. It suffers from its own limitations. Before attempting to discuss the subject in all its phases, it starts out with the assumption that since miracles interfere with the continuity of natural development, the miraculous element must be ruled out of the discussion. The argument is that since God does not intervene in human affairs now, the probability is that He has never done so in the past. God, in other words, is limited by the laws of nature and by His works of providence; He works through natural means. Such a theory of the universe naturally rejects the idea of a miraculous and direct revelation of the risen Christ to Saul of Tarsus. The momentous event is resolved into an internal process, accompanied perhaps by favourable conditions from without.

Baur, for instance, shifts the scene of the conversion from the outer sphere to the inner consciousness. He seizes with great eagerness upon the passage in Galatians

1:16, where Paul speaks of his experience almost like a modern psychologist, as a revelation of the Son of God "in him." According to the founder of the above-mentioned school, the revelation of Christ to Paul was not external, but internal; not objective in the philosophic sense, but subjective. It was a spiritual experience. Paul so regarded it in writing to the Galatian converts. But in speaking of the spiritual manifestation of Christ to the soul and the consequent change from spiritual darkness to light, Paul uses a number of figurative expressions which were translated by the author of Acts into the language of historical fact. The threefold narrative of it in Acts is the projection of an inner event into the sphere of objective reality. Paul's conversion was not an instantaneous act. The inner change of mind in his case was gradually brought about by a process of reflection upon the arguments advanced by the Christians to prove the Messiahship of Jesus and by the moral effect of Stephen's speech and martyrdom. Intellectually and morally Saul was prepared for a visionary sight of Jesus on the road to Damascus. No miracle was necessary. It was an internal or subjective vision and not an external appearance of the risen Lord. But what ground is there for this denial of the external side of Paul's experience? The theory breaks down in the face of I Corinthians 9:1 and 15:8. Paul saw Jesus with his bodily eyes as the other apostles had seen Him after the resurrection. That it was the spiritual immaterial body of the risen Jesus does not alter the fact. It was the resurrection body of Jesus that he saw. But it was more than a spiritual experience. This is clear from the plain, matter-of-fact language, "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? . . . Last of all, as to an abortion, He was seen of me also."

Paul's apostleship rested on the historical fact of his having seen Jesus. He was a witness that Jesus was liv-

ing. The appearance was not visionary, but actual. Paul's change of conviction and conduct was not the product of an intellectual and moral fermentation, nor was the revelation of Christ to him merely an inward impression made on the mind of the persecutor during a trance or ecstasy. Baur's interpretation of the conversion will not stand the test. The distinguished critic, after wrestling with the problem for many years, finally gave up the theory as a failure. He confessed, shortly before his death (1860) that "no psychological or dialectical analysis can explore the inner mystery of the act in which God revealed His Son in Paul. The sudden transformation of Paul from the most violent adversary of Christianity into its most determined herald is nothing short of a miracle" (*Christianity*, p. 45).

This statement by Baur is rather surprising in view of his earlier denial of the possibility of the miraculous. His frank admission virtually amounts to a recognition of the supernatural. But later writers, such as Holsten and Pfleiderer, were not satisfied to leave the problem where Baur had left it. Holsten, in his elaborate exposition of the psychological process which is supposed to lie back of the conversion, eliminates the supernatural by resolving the Damascus experience into a change of conviction as to the meaning of the cross of Christ. To the unconverted Pharisee the cross was a stumbling-block which had absolutely no place in the Jewish conception of the Messiah. But increasing hostility to this despised emblem of a supposedly blasphemous sect brought him into direct contact with the disciples, who defended themselves and their faith in the Crucified by explaining the death of Jesus as a vicarious means of atonement. The Christ of history, they contended, was the Suffering Servant of Isaiah fifty-three. They can point to the evidence of His resurrection as a proof of His Messiahship. There are those who have seen

Him with their own eyes before He ascended to heaven. Saul, of course, did not believe that such was actually the case. Nevertheless, the idea was in his mind and the only obstacle to his becoming a disciple was a vision of the risen Christ. That vision finally came to the persecutor near Damascus. Holsten admits that Paul regarded the vision as objectively real. But in view of the fact that a naturalistic historian cannot for a moment allow the possibility of the miraculous, the vision is represented as a psychological act of Saul's mind. It is the product of his own thoughts. The change of which Paul speaks was essentially a change of conviction with respect to the Christian religion. The longer he thought about it the more he was convinced that the faith of the disciples in the Messianic dignity of the crucified and risen Jesus was not so foolish after all, especially when viewed in the light of His resurrection. The reason why Paul regarded the vision as an objective reality was because he failed to distinguish a mental image from an actual perception. He was visionary by nature. He was nervous, easily overwrought, bilious, delicate, subject to epilepsy and ecstatic visions. His conversion was probably the first of a series of ecstatic visions. Fortunately, Holsten does not insist on the truth of his solution; he merely looks upon it as a possible explanation (*Evangelium des Paulus,* 1868).

Pfleiderer, too, admits the hypothetical character of his psychological explanation of Paul's conversion. The claim is made that the change of attitude was brought about not so much by a moral impression as by a slowly maturing intellectual conviction that the Christian religion represented a higher plane of truth than Judaism. While the passages in I Corinthians 9:1 and 15:8 clearly indicate that Paul was convinced of the external appearance of Christ with which he was favoured, he also intimates in Galatians 1:16 and II Corinthians 4:6 that the Christ-

ophany was an inward experience. According to Pfleiderer, the "goads" mentioned in Acts 26:14 furnish a psychological hint for a perfectly natural explanation of the great change in Paul's life. Before his conversion, Saul was gradually coming nearer to Christianity. Increasing doubts as to the wisdom of his persecuting activity made him very unhappy. The Pharisee was impressed against his will whenever he came in contact with the remarkable heroism of these joyful martyrs going to their fate with a prayer of intercession upon their lips in behalf of their enemies. A faith which produced such martyrs could hardly be a delusion. They spoke of the vicarious death of the Crucified for the sins of the world. Of course, if Jesus was an innocent Sufferer, as they had claimed, His death might atone for the sins of others just as the sufferings of a righteous man under the old dispensation would atone for the sins of the group to which he belonged, whether it be the household, clan, tribe or nation.

Furthermore, the young zealot was greatly perplexed by the status of his own people. The Messiah, it was taught, could not come to an unrighteous nation. And so the Pharisees made every effort to prepare the people for His coming. But where is the righteous nation? Paul began to ask. Had the efforts of the Pharisees to lead the nation to righteousness gone for nought? Obviously more was needed than the Pharisaic ideal of legal righteousness. As to his own accomplishments in that direction the conscientious young Pharisee had to confess that with all his zeal for righteousness he had failed to conquer his own sinful desires (Rom. 7). On the basis of the tenth commandment, which demands the conquest of every selfish desire, he began to realize that righteousness was something more than the fulfilment of mere external requirements. In looking over the ten commandments, he could say of all except the tenth, "all these have I kept from my

youth up." That commandment troubled and worried him more than all the rest. If a man is to be saved by the works of the law he must keep not fifty-one per cent. of the law, but the whole of it. And Paul was conscious of having broken the law in the unseen depths of the soul. He no longer thought of sin as an external act. The seat of sin is in the heart. Covetousness is sin. Saul could not keep this part of the decalogue. He could not get rid of covetousness, evil thoughts and sinful desires. Even when he did not actually break the letter of the law, he found himself wanting to do so, and that he knew was wrong. The discovery filled him with discouragement and sometimes with despair. The law might command, but it could not secure performance, owing to the weakness and sinfulness of human nature. Something more is needed to make a man righteous than the precepts and rules of Jewish law.

May it not be possible, he argued, that what the law could not do might be accomplished through faith in Jesus Christ and a life of fellowship with Him? This, at least, is what the disciples claimed for their religion. They seemed to have something that he did not posses. They had a buoyant, dynamic faith in the risen Christ. That faith of theirs was based on the fact that they had seen Jesus after the resurrection. If it is true that Jesus rose from the dead and was exalted to the right hand of God, then the death of Jesus must have been vicarious and faith in Him as the Messiah is the divinely ordained means of salvation. Being thus occupied with his thoughts on the lonely road to Damascus, the image of the crucified Jesus suddenly presented itself to his inner consciousness. To him the image of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven was familiar enough (Dan. 7: 13). Such a mental picture might easily be connected in Paul's mind with the image of the risen Jesus. Toward the end of the mo-

mentous journey the image of the celestial Christ had already taken such hold upon the persecutor that all further resistance was of no avail. Pfleiderer believes that the decisive event can be explained without a miracle. "It appears to me," he says, "that we are in a position to perceive fully the mental condition and circumstances from which the vision of Paul can be psychologically explained: an excitable, nervous temperament; a soul that had been violently agitated and torn by the most terrible doubts; a most vivid phantasy, occupied with the awful scenes of persecution on the one hand, and on the other by the ideal image of the celestial Christ; in addition, the nearness of Damascus with the urgency of a decision, the lonely stillness, the scorching and blinding heat of the desert—in fact, everything combined to produce one of those ecstatic states in which the soul believes that it sees those images and conceptions which profoundly agitate it as if they were phenomena proceeding from the outward world" (*The Influence of the Apostle Paul on Christianity,* 1897, pages 42-43).

The psychological theories advanced by Holsten and Pfleiderer have much in common and betray the same weakness. To assume at the very outset that God cannot reveal Himself to man except through the ordinary processes of human development and to approach the decisive event in Paul's life from the point of view of the impossibility of the miraculous is utterly unscientific. Prejudice is not science. To limit the discussion to the sphere of the natural and to relegate Paul's testimony and everything else bordering on the supernatural to the realm of the imaginary is prejudicial to truth. Any thinking man will welcome a psychological analysis of the momentous scene, provided it is in harmony with all the facts in the case. The raw materials of conversion do not explain the crisis. Physical factors may fill in the background, but

they did not produce the change. Neither did it proceed from the laboratory of Saul's own thoughts. There is no indication anywhere that Saul had been favourably impressed with the religion of the Galilæan Prophet and that he was thinking of Jesus when he drew near to Damascus. If he thought of Him at all he thought of Him as an enemy of the faith which he cherished with all his heart. And that is why he persecuted Jesus in His disciples. His state of mind was not likely to give birth to a vision so fatal to his career. He expressly denies that he had been previously won over by Christian teaching which later crystallized into a vision of Christ. Human instruction had no part in the foundation of his faith. By saying this we do not mean to imply that Saul the Pharisee was totally ignorant of the life and teachings of Jesus, especially when the outlines of Jesus' life and death were known to friend and foe alike. It is scarcely conceivable that the chief persecutor of the Christians could bear witness to the blasphemous character of their doctrines and cast his vote against them on a life and death issue without knowing anything about them and of their history. But whatever knowledge he may have had of the Christian movement only increased his opposition to the worshippers of a supposedly false Messiah. He really persecuted the Christians because he saw more clearly than they did what it would mean for the Jewish religion.

The great change in Paul's life did not lie in the moral region. There is no proof for the assertion that Saul was under real conviction of sin before his conversion, and that the inner conflict between the right moral intention and the natural impulses, alluded to in the seventh chapter of Romans, is a biographical leaf from the writer's Pharisaic experience. Men may differ as to whether the struggle, there referred to, relates to the unregenerate or the regenerate life. In any event the conflict between the higher

and the lower nature of man is described from the point of view of the regenerate. Paul's contrast between flesh and spirit, between the down-dragging, hindering power of sin and the life-giving spirit of the indwelling Christ, is certainly a Christian development, whatever may have been his attitude toward the Jewish law while on a mission of persecution to Damascus. His conversion cannot be attributed to a changed attitude toward the law and to a growing conviction that the Christian way of attaining righteousness was the true one. We do not deny that the young Pharisee may have been conscious of his own shortcomings. But his failure to keep the whole law did not drive him into the Christian fold. On the contrary; if the unconverted Pharisee was at all conscious of his failings, the deficiency could be made up by redoubled zeal for the law. What could be more meritorious from the standpoint of the Jewish law than the persecution of a blasphemous and seditious sect? He must have been familiar with the consoling doctrine, taught by some of the rabbis, that ultimate salvation is assured as long as fifty-one per cent. of a man's deeds are good. Any deficiency in his case, therefore, would be more than overbalanced by a specially meritorious act of service to religion. At all events, he was actuated by an honest striving after righteousness. He was fully convinced that he ought to oppose with all his might the cause of Christianity. And from what we know of his character we cannot believe that he plunged into the work of persecution to satisfy an uneasy conscience or because he was fighting against a better conviction. His complete sincerity would not have permitted him to persecute those by whom he was favourably impressed. He was too honest a man for that. Had he thought for a moment that salvation was not a work of merit but of forgiving grace he would have made the experiment and convinced himself. That the vision which

he saw sprang from a desire to make the venture, runs counter to what we know of the man.

From a mental and moral point of view Saul's condition before conversion was not favourable to a vision of Jesus. The accusing voice of the heavenly Speaker puzzles him. He is obliged to ask the question, "Who art Thou, Lord?" and then receives the startling reply, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Why was he so puzzled? Because he had been serving God after the manner of his fathers with a pure conscience. His work of persecution was the logical outcome of his zealous devotion to the Jewish religion. Something awful had to happen before the conscientious bigot could become an apostle of the faith which he was about to destroy. His introduction to Christianity came at an unexpected time (I Cor. 15:8). A violent operation was necessary before the sprouting branch could be torn from the sour grape-vine of a legalistic religion and grafted into Christ the Vine.

To treat the conversion solely as an inner spiritual development is inconsistent with I Corinthians. The endeavour to find some inner connection between the Damascus experience and Paul's life before and after it is commendable, especially on the basis of Galatians 1:16. But as there are two series of facts to be reckoned with, any attempted explanation of the event which limits itself to only one side of the question, is destined to fail. To eliminate the supernatural from the discussion on the plea of psychological necessity simply means that psychology is not competent to deal with such a complex experience. It is high time to admit that a purely psychological analysis of the event has its limitations. The supernatural element in Paul's experience seems to baffle our psychologists. The best that they can do with it is to leave it alone. And as regards the psychological problem of the conversion itself the tendency is to dismiss the subject with a few

general observations about the secret of personality which no psychological key can as yet disclose to our gaze. But the supernatural factor is there, and we must reckon with it. A gradual psychological process is ruled out by the emphatic language of the Pauline Epistles. It is impossible to account for the sudden change except by supernatural means. The physical, mental, moral and spiritual equipment of the converted Pharisee and his whole previous development do not explain it. We can readily see that the leader of a well-planned persecution would learn many things concerning the Christians and their Messiah, but whatever facts he may have acquired in this way did not bring about the conversion. The Damascus experience transformed and glorified these facts and gave them an entirely different setting. On that memorable day the convert received a new interpretation of the facts and a new attitude toward them. The cause of the conversion was an external appearance of Jesus which resulted in a spiritual union with the risen Christ.

The theory that Paul's vision of Jesus was the result of overwrought nerves, of an ecstatic temperament, of a recurrent malady or constitutional weakness, such as epilepsy, is untenable. Any man who takes the trouble to read his Epistles will find it increasingly difficult to accuse the apostle of epileptic insanity. It is impossible to believe that we are dealing with an epileptic lunatic and that his new allegiance was due to an illusion. The impression that we get from Paul's writings is that he was a healthy man. The critical eye looks in vain for any particular trait which might betray the flickering unrest of a sick soul. He was endowed with good common sense and the usual characteristics of a normal man. The only difference between him and the average man seems to be that he took his religion more seriously than the rank and file. The spiritual sanity of this many-sided man is beyond

question. He may have had his visions, revelations, and trances, as he himself relates in II Corinthians 12. But Paul distinguishes these experiences very sharply from the Damascus experience and from his seeing of the Lord to which he refers in I Corinthians. It was something unique. This seeing of Jesus was the last of a series of resurrection appearances. It was the last appearance of the kind to take place. Paul never speaks of seeing Jesus again. It was the only time that he had actually seen the risen Christ. It was no mere dream, but a "waking vision" in broad daylight. It was not a nightmare or a daydream either. Neither was it a mental image of his own reflections, for he puts it on a par with the resurrection appearances of Jesus to the first disciples. He is no visionary enthusiast who cannot distinguish between an ecstatic rapture and a real appearance of Christ to his physical eyes. The visions and revelations spoken of in II Corinthians belong to the apostle's private and personal life and concern him alone. He is reluctant to speak of them. But the Damascus experience stands by itself and belongs to a different order of facts. It is part of the evidence for the resurrection of Christ, and so he speaks of it with the same confidence with which the disciples related the resurrection appearances of Jesus which they themselves had witnessed.

Paul may not have known anything about the technique of experimental psychology. But even if he did live in the first century he had enough common sense to be able to distinguish between an objectively real experience and a mental picture thrown on the retina of the eye from within in consequence of some pathological condition or psychical emotion. It certainly requires a large measure of credulity to believe that the gifted Pharisee could be deluded and misled by a purely imaginary experience when there was so much at stake. The man who had learned to do some

of his own thinking while sitting at the feet of Gamaliel, is no dweller in a fool's paradise of thought and feeling. He was not altogether devoid of the critical faculty, as may be seen from his advice to the Thessalonians, who are bidden to "prove all things," and hold fast only that which is good (I Thess. 5:1). Now, to a zealous Pharisee bent on destroying the Christians, a vision of Jesus was not "good" in any sense. It was the worst thing that could happen to him and to the faith which he cherished and defended with such consuming zeal. Would a man of his standing and with his powers of discrimination take up a most perilous calling in the interests of a despised and hated sect, unless there was some cogent and convincing reason for so doing? It is assumed that he only imagined that he saw Jesus. But is it reasonable to suppose that a fanatical persecutor of Christianity could also imagine a conversation of some length which would completely reverse his present course? According to the vision-hypothesis, Saul must have had some faith in Christ and His cause before he was converted, otherwise he would not have been in the proper frame of mind to imagine that he saw Jesus.

But this is mere guess-work. The evidence shows that his faith in Christ was engendered by the vision and not *vice versa*. If the vision was the product of a growing faith in the Christian religion, how did he acquire it? Must we assume that it was connected with his physiological makeup? There is no evidence to show that Paul was an epileptic, and that the strain of his persecuting activity completely unnerved him. He had but one desire and that was to exterminate the Christians. As a persecutor he was impervious to any evidence coming from a Christian source. His mind was fully made up and he knew what he was about. The educated Pharisee could learn nothing from the ignorant followers of a Man who had never

attended a rabbinical college. They may be courageous and all that, but any courage which is begotten of fanaticism does not impress him. Judaism will evoke as much heroism as Christianity any day. A loyal Jew has something to be heroic about; these deluded people have nothing to look forward to but a cross. They speak of a resurrection and set up the preposterous claim that some of their members have seen Him. But these are the babblings of a lot of simple-minded and credulous people. That this Jesus will appear only to those who believe in Him is enough for Saul of Tarsus. He will not believe, he says. He is absolutely convinced that these alleged resurrection appearances are nothing but a pure fabrication. The power of the resurrection in the transformed lives of his victims does not attract him; it nauseated him and stirred his ire to think that human beings could fall so low as to forsake the true faith for the blasphemous religion of a condemned criminal. Something else is needed to convert him. And he saw and believed. What had happened? The persecutor was suddenly converted and transformed into a believer by the heavenly vision.

That he had actually seen Jesus with his own eyes, heard His voice and conversed with Him at some length is as clear to him as his own existence. He alludes to the supernatural light which at high noon outshone even the sun. Presently the prostrate man hears a voice calling to him and saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" The prostrate man looks up and in the light he sees a more than human Form. He asks, "Who art Thou, Lord?" and receives the reply, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Continuing the conversation the Master entrusts him with a universal mission. Paul, the apostle, is to bear witness of what he has seen and heard. In Acts 9:7 it is said that his companions remained "speechless, hearing the voice but beholding no man." This implies

that Paul did see somebody. Reading between the lines, we learn that it was Jesus. Later Ananias comes to him and tells him that he had been chosen of God "to see the Righteous One and to hear His voice." And in I Corinthians Paul says in so many words, "I saw the Lord as the other disciples had seen Him after the resurrection." In presenting Paul to the apostles at Jerusalem, Barnabas emphatically declared that "he had seen the Lord in the way and that he had spoken to Him" (Acts 9:27). Paul never doubted for a moment that he had actually seen the risen Christ and heard His commissioning voice. The evidence, it is said, only proves that Paul believed in the reality of the manifestation, and that in I Corinthians he seems to have in mind a real bodily appearance of the risen Christ which he associates with his apostleship. That evidence, however, cannot be set aside in favour of a one-sided natural interpretation. It is sufficient for our present purpose, in view of the confessed failure of psychology to explain the conversion.

Is it not a remarkable fact that of the many young men coming from Cilicia and elsewhere to complete their studies in the school of the most illustrious Pharisee of the age only one, Saul of Tarsus, had his Damascus? Some writers are of the opinion that Saul's conversion was the natural outcome of the religion of the Pharisees. If the new birth had its roots in a "liberal Judaism," why is it that the teachings of Gamaliel did not produce another Saul? Was the young Cilician the only graduate who had caught the spirit of his great teacher? If that is so, why did not the liberal teacher and other liberals come out into the open and take the same step? Did Saul deliberately renounce the Jewish religion because of a growing conviction that the Pharisees were wrong in their interpretation of religion and that the disciples were right? The sudden break with Judaism is against such an assumption, as is

also the fact that the young theologian could not have committed the unpardonable sin of having carried on the persecution in the face of better convictions. According to his own emphatic words, his conversion was no gradual development, but a sudden break with all his past thinking. He actually cites his Pharisaic training and bias to show that the momentous change was not due to human agency, but to a direct revelation from Christ. It is impossible to explain the conversion of a man like Paul by his past. As a fact of religious experience, it stands quite alone in the history of Christianity. The nearest approach to it is the conversion of Augustine (386 A. D.), who, at the age of thirty-three, had his Damascus experience under a fig tree in a garden near Milan. Saul, the persecutor, was about the same age when he fell prostrate on the ground near the gardens of Damascus, suddenly exclaiming, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And he is told to make known to all the world what he has seen and heard. This is the task of every disciple of the risen and ever-present Christ.

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